ADELAIDE DE NARBONNE,

WITH MEMOIRS OF

CHARLOTTE DE CORDET.

A TALE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

HENRY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

" The gates of mercy ſhall be all ſhut up,
" And the fleſhed ſoldier, rough and hard of heart,
" In liberty of bloody hand ſhall range
" With conſcience wide as hell."

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

" Regretter ce ceux qu'on aime, eſt un bien, en comparaiſon de
" vivre avec ce qu'on hait."

ROCHEFAUCAULT.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADELAIDE

DE

NARBONNE.

CHAP. I.

" Oh ſoft Remembrance! airy ſprite,
" Thou ſecond life of bliſs and pain;
" Exquiſite ſenſe of keen delight,
" Who giv'ſt our feelings back again."

FOX.

" This heart, by grief congeal'd
" Is no more ſenſible of Love's endearments."

MILLER.

ON the gentlemen's return to the Caſtle, the firſt object which attracted their attention was Mademoiſelle de Cordet, directing the diſtribution of

cordials and different refreſhments amongſt the fugitives, in proportion as their wants or condition required them.

The intereſt ſhe took in this employment, had hitherto contributed to ſupport her worn-out ſpirits and haraſſed frame in the execution of it; and, though often forced to lean on one of the domeſtics, ſhe ſtill perſevered in the Samaritan office of adminiſtering to the diſtreſſes and neceſſities of thoſe around her.

Corporeal ſtrength, however, is only capable of bearing to a certain degree, and Charlotte's had now reached its climax. M. de Clermont perceived, with concern, the efforts ſhe made to ſurmount any conſideration of perſonal fatigue; and, apprehenſive of future conſequences to her health, peremptorily inſiſted on her retiring to her chamber, which, upon receiving every aſſurance of her poſt being properly occupied during her abſence, ſhe at length conſented to, though with much reluctance.

Before ſhe could, nevertheleſs, be perſuaded to enter her own apartment, ſhe repaired to that of the Counteſs, who ſtill continued to enjoy ſome repoſe; but which would probably never have been obtained without the aſſiſtance of a powerful opiate infuſed in a draught, preſented by the ſurgeon on his firſt arrival.

Charlotte was ſtrongly entreated to try the compoſing effects of a ſimilar preſcription; but ſhe poſitively refuſed to comply with every requeſt of the kind. It might prolong her ſleep for too great a period, and by that means deprive others of her humane attentions.—Such was the true motive that excluded ſelf-conſideration, though not oſtentatiouſly diſplayed by the force of language. We may ſafely venture to mention this antediluvian idea, without apprehending the generality of the world will renounce their repoſe from the ſame motive, or endanger their health by following her example.

Short, confuſed, and diſtreſſing ſlumbers, broken by ſudden ſtarts of horror, afforded ſo little proſpect of benefit from the attempt, that Mademoiſelle de Cordet left her bed two hours after entering it.—So juſt is the obſervation, that innocence ſometimes experiences a tranſient ſenſation like guilt, without the reality of the latter to produce it.

On repairing, in the morning, to the reſidence of her *protegées*, ſhe found every thing in that quarter arranged to her ſatisfaction; and learning ſoon afterwards, that Madame de Narbonne was now awake, ſhe inſtantly prepared to attend her ſummons.

With infinite pleaſure, Charlotte remarked the agreeable change that had taken place in the appearance of the Counteſs, who now ſeemed to be tolerably recruited by the medicinal aid ſhe had received. Jacqueline, in compliance with her Lady's orders, and her own ſtill more irreſiſtible inclination, was yet deeply buried in the arms of repoſe, without the aſſiſtance of any other phyſician than a ſound conſtitution, and a mind unincumbered by much ſenſibility for diſtreſs in which ſhe was not herſelf implicated.

Her place, however, was not left vacant; Madame de Narbonne's nurſe occupied it during her abſence.

From this perſon's ſuperior judgment and calmer ſpirits, the Counteſs had now gathered every leading tranſaction of the night, and experienced the warmeſt feelings of grateful acknowledgment as ſhe liſtened to the humane and uncommon exertions of her friends on the occaſion. The encomiums poured forth on Charlotte's behaviour, on the activity and conſiderate conduct of M. de Clermont, with an account of the noble and indefatigable aſſiſtance received from Mr. Haſtings, obtained the moſt marked approbation from her to whom it was related; and the Counteſs, for once, ſeemed to have laid aſide her uſual indifference to the

the world and its concerns, as her old friend dwelt minutely on ſeveral parts of the intereſting theme.

In anſwer to a meſſage of enquiry ſent to Mr. Montague, the ladies were informed that he ſtill remained in a very weak ſtate; but, provided no ſymptoms of fever appeared, his caſe was not otherwiſe dangerous. Several traits, which the medical people and attendants gave of this Engliſhman's amiable character and diſpoſition, endeared him to the family; the inferior claſs of which could not reſtrain themſelves from wiſhing that their Lady's ſecond matrimonial choice had rather fallen on a man like him, than the inſignificant being whom ſhe had condeſcended to make their maſter.

Accuſtomed, while ſhe kept her apartment, to hear ſo many intereſting particulars relative to the recent conduct of the invalid and his friend Haſtings, Madame de Narbonne began to take a concern in their welfare; and, relaxing from her former reſerve, at laſt came to the reſolution of thanking them in perſon for their generous interference, and the ſolicitude ſhe knew they had expreſſed for her ſafety.

In conſequence of this determination, mutual civilities were exchanged between Madame and Mr. Haſtings, who waited upon her at her particular requeſt, and afterwards returned to acquaint

Montague, who was unable to leave his chamber, with the intention of the Counteſs to viſit him there.

Nothing ſo much contributes to detach the feeling mind from ſelfiſh and melancholy contemplations of perſonal diſtreſs, as the ſufferings of thoſe to whom we conceive ourſelves materially indebted, and conſequently under the neceſſity of ſacrificing private affliction to the warm and impulſive ſenſation of gratitude, which calls upon our endeavours to diſſipate the chagrin of a benefactor at the expence of a temporary inattention to our own misfortunes.

The care and anxiety viſible on all ſides, to promote the evident alteration which had now taken place in Madame de Narbonne's diſpoſition, convinced her that her friends conſidered that as permanent, which ſhe herſelf knew to be merely accidental, and produced by local circumſtances alone; circumſtances which, at that juncture, contributed more to their comfort and happineſs than any of the preſent inhabitants of the Caſtle choſe openly to avow.

About this period, intelligence was received of an engagement having taken place between the army of Charette and the Republicans, in which the Conventional forces were defeated, and obliged

to

to retreat with a great loſs in killed, wounded, and priſoners; amongſt the latter, De la Ville was ſaid to be included. The report ſeemed to occaſion no grief at the Caſtle of Narbonne, and appeared to be confirmed by his long abſence.

Until ſomething further, however, tranſpired on the ſubject, M. de Clermont judged it proper to remain with the Counteſs, whoſe ſituation at this time was by no means an enviable one.

Reprobated by the generality of Royaliſts for the plebeian connection ſhe had formed, which they looked upon as degrading in the extreme, and conſidered as a ſhameleſs avowal of her political principles—on the other ſide, ſuſpected by the Republicans, from the rank and riches of her anceſtors, the attachment ſhe was preſumed to retain for the cauſe of Nobility evinced in the perſevering retention of her family name, together with her indifference and inactivity in the cauſe of modern reformation—no wonder, when thus viewed through the falſe medium of prejudice or paſſion, if Madame de Narbonne had inſenſibly become an object of diſlike to both parties, without being conſcious of having particularly merited it from either of them.

M. de Clermont was nevertheleſs better informed on the ſubject, and his meaſures, as uſual, were

taken with wiſdom and promptitude. The ſelect band of aſſociates, whoſe fidelity had been ſo lately and ſucceſsfully put to the proof, ſeconded his wiſhes, and were retained as a ſafeguard to the inhabitants of the Caſtle. This arrangement was thought a prudent one, leſt the banditti of the Royal Army, elated with their recent victory, and irritated againſt the Counteſs, from the reaſons already aſſigned, ſhould make another attempt upon the Caſtle, during the abſence of its Republican owner.

Madame de Clermont and her family were alſo removed hither, as a place of greater ſecurity againſt the marauding parties that now ſwarmed in all quarters. This lady's mental accompliſhments, however, were of too ſuperficial a nature to prove any material acquiſition to their ſociety. No fluttering coxcomb was at preſent a reſident at the Caſtle; and a fluttering coxcomb, whoſe principal recommendation conſiſted in a good ſtock of aſſurance, and a comfortable portion of frivolity, was infinitely ſuperior, in her opinion, to the graver M. de Clermont, with all his ſenſe, abilities, and uncommon merit.

Nevertheleſs, Madame de Clermont had hitherto been ſtrictly virtuous, for ſhe durſt not venture to offend her huſband *ſeriouſly!*

Every

Every condition in life has its particular advantages: one circumſtance alone partly contributed to reconcile Madame de Clermont to the horrid *ennui* that reigned, with gloomy uniformity, in the Caſtle of Narbonne, and ſhe found it a conſolatory reflection to the heart of a mother: if there appeared to be no young men, calculated for the laudable purpoſes of flattery and flirtation, it followed of courſe that—her daughters could not rival her!

Madame de Narbonne, ſenſible of the obligations ſhe was under to thoſe who took ſo many precautions for her peace and ſafety, feeling herſelf freed too from the preſence of a huſband ſhe evidently deſpiſed, and anxious to ſhew her ſolicitude for the recovery of Mr. Montague, whom ſhe conſidered as more immediately ſuffering on her account, mixed in the ſociety of her gueſts with a frequency which, ſhe once imagined, no worldly conſideration could have induced her to attempt.

The poor fugitives, who had been driven from their late peaceful homes by the devouring conflagration, and involved in one general maſs of ruin, were provided for in different ways. Many of thoſe who laboured under the greateſt diſtreſs, together with a few of the moſt martial and active

appearance, were retained in the Caſtle: the firſt, that their wounds might be properly attended to; the others, to aſſiſt in defending their benefactors, ſhould an attack be commenced again by any of the Brigands. As for the remainder, they were diſtributed through the neighbouring villages; a certain ſum being given to every family, who, according to their abilities, agreed to receive a ſpecified number of the unhappy and deſtitute wretches, till otherwiſe diſpoſed of.

"I have often wondered, my dear Madam," ſaid Charlotte, one day as ſhe and the Counteſs left Montague's apartment, "I have frequently wondered at a circumſtance which, nevertheleſs, I ſhould not have ventured to notice, had I not obſerved that you yourſelf ſeemed particularly ſenſible of my being ſtruck with it this afternoon;—but may I proceed without offence?—I would not hurt your feelings, or wiſh a recurrence to diſagreeable events, for any conſideration whatever."

She pauſed, fearful to enquire further without permiſſion.

Madame de Narbonne, who now loved her as a daughter, and could ſcarcely refuſe any requeſt ſhe made, deſired her, in a tremulous voice, to explain herſelf.—"Though," added ſhe, deeply ſighing,

"I

"I think I am already half acquainted with what you aim at."

"Then, my deareſt Madam," replied the other, "I need not apologize for what I am going to ſay, when I tell you that the penſive, melancholy air with which you ſometimes regard our young Engliſhman, and the conſequent abſence of mind that generally accompanies this circumſtance, intereſts me in a very conſiderable degree; becauſe it ſeems to indicate ſome ſecret anxiety, ſome painful recollection, which might poſſibly be removed if the hidden ſource of it was diſcovered.—But, I repeat, I ſhould not have taken the freedom of making this remark, had you not ſeen me unconſciouſly attentive to the cauſe that produced it;—and pardon me if I add, a ſtill ſtronger motive alſo urged the enquiry."

She looked in the face of the Counteſs with a timid expreſſion of ſolicitude, and an evident reluctance to proceed.

"Go on, my ſweet friend," ſaid Madame de Narbonne; "I have already drank too many bitter draughts to ſhrink from the cup that remains for me. You, I am certain, can ſay nothing diſagreeable on any ſubject."

"Ah Madame! may you continue to think ſo," replied Charlotte, "when you hear what is painful for me to relate, though neceſſary to be told!—Your emotion in the apartment of Mr. Montague, has not I fear, my dear Madam, paſſed unnoticed by others more than myſelf; and thoſe others may not, perhaps, be diſpoſed to ſilence, or inclined to put ſo favourable a conſtruction on appearances as their real nature probably merits."

Again Charlotte ſtopped; but the Counteſs anſwered not immediately. A pang, produced by ſecret indignation, coloured for an inſtant her pallid cheek with a faint glow of crimſon; but quickly yielded its tranſient ſtation to the deadly hue which generally overſpread her fine features. She reflected, however, that nothing but motives of the pureſt friendſhip could have impelled Charlotte to be thus explicit; and ſhe likewiſe reflected that Slander ever willingly miſtakes the ſemblance of error for the ſubſtance, and, paſſing judgment accordingly, pronounces the awful ſentence of *guilty* on all thoſe whoſe moral principles may prove a ſatire on its own mode of proceeding.

That appearances were indeed favourable to the wiſhes of this perverter of human actions, Madame de Narbonne, in the preſent inſtance, could not deny.

She

She ſighed, attempted to ſpeak, and was again ſilent; then making an effort to conquer her agitation, ſhe forced a languid ſmile to tremble on her lips, but it was a ſmile ſtruggling with anguiſh, that filled Charlotte's eyes with ſympathy.

At laſt, "I fear, my dear girl," ſaid ſhe, "I have unconſciouſly afforded but too much room for the obſervations you hint at. I might have known that no time of life, no conduct whatever is free from the jaundiced eye of improper conſtruction. Experience ought to have taught me this melancholy truth; but Innocence, ſuſpecting no evil, is apt to be off its guard. From my acquaintance with your temper and diſpoſition, I am very certain you feel not leſs pain in putting this queſtion, than, perhaps, it may coſt me to anſwer it."

"Ah! ſtop then, Madame," cried Charlotte, interrupting her with energy; "let not any thing I have ſaid be of conſequence enough to cauſe you a moment's uneaſineſs! I am ſatisfied—I aſk no farther explanation."

"No, my charming friend," replied the Counteſs, "you are not ſatisfied; nor ſhould I be ſo myſelf, were you permitted to remain ignorant of the circumſtance alluded to. Yet, perhaps, it is not a proper opportunity to be ſo explicit at preſent, as you may probably hereafter find me.—This far, however,"

however," continued ſhe, with much emotion, "this far, at leaſt, I will tell you:—Montague—that Montague whom I have indulged myſelf in obſerving, reſembles, in air and figure, a long loſt friend, whoſe memory can never be conſigned to oblivion while earthly exiſtence is lent the ill-fated being before you!—This diſcovery alone rivetted my attention upon him, and called forth remembrances often too powerful to combat; of courſe the agitation they occaſioned, may frequently have been remarked when I leaſt ſuſpected it.—'Strange coincidence of events!' I have ſometimes whiſpered to myſelf, 'thus to find a likeneſs between perſons totally unconnected by religion, laws, or country, and ſome of whom the ſilent grave have for ever, in this world at leaſt——' But it ſignifies not," added ſhe, with an expreſſive look to heaven, "time will remove all barriers, and explain all myſteries, at its appointed period.—This intereſting Engliſhman knows not the anguiſh, intermixed with a certain degree of melancholy pleaſure, which ſwells my heart almoſt to burſting, while buried in the contemplations originating from ſo incomprehenſible a ſimilitude; and yet this ſame ſimilitude would not perhaps bear a very ſtrict ſcrutiny. It is rather a family reſemblance, than an individual one—ſomething that ſtrikes the memory without being

being definable.—He has a brother, I presume, too?"

"Not that I know of," answered Charlotte, "at least, certainly not in France; and, from some hints dropped in conversation with his countryman, I rather think he possesses no such relation."

"Since we are upon this subject, I will tell you," returned the Countess, "why I suppose so. Hitherto I have cautiously avoided the topic from inability to enter upon it; but the ice is now broken, and I find myself at present more equal to the task than has yet been the case.—You, no doubt, would receive some account, though I am ignorant of what nature, relative to the cause of my sudden indisposition on the night of the *fête champêtre*. I will now mention what I recollect of that occurrence myself. In my way from the recess, I was met in the long avenue by two gentlemen, one of whom, after passing me, seized upon some trifling incident to return, and expressed an anxiety for my safety, as particularly interested in it. Willing, you know, to avoid all intercourse with strangers, I at first paid little or no attention to either of them, till the sound of this person's voice startled me; I raised my eyes to his face; he wore a mask, but his form was undisguised, and my heart beat with redoubled violence, as that form, his

his air, and voice preſented themſelves to obſervation. I entreated to hear his name, to be made acquainted with his place of reſidence and family? My queſtions ſeemed to embarraſs him; he evaded them, and briefly replied, that the ſubjects of my enquiry were of too little importance to be of any conſequence to me. At length, however, I prevailed upon him to unmaſk, and haſtily glancing my eyes over his features—Heavens and earth, what were the ſenſations of the moment!—But leiſure for inveſtigation was not permitted me—ſenſe and reflection inſtantly fled, and I ſunk upon the ground at his feet.

"When recollection returned, I found myſelf in my own apartment, and in bed; but the recent viſion (for I could not conceive it was any thing elſe) ſtill floated before my view, and the ſtriking traits it exhibited, yet remain deeply engraven on the bleeding tablet of memory!—My health yielded to the force of imagination; never of a ſtrong conſtitution, and even that radically ſhattered by ſevere and repeated trials, no wonder if every new incident, that points in any way to paſt occurrences, ſhould powerfully affect my feelings.—Alas! what could be a greater proof of mental and bodily debility than the condition this event reduced me to? For well, too well am I convinced it was

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an illuſion of the ſenſes that thus ſported with my miſery;—well, too well am I convinced the dark and gloomy confines of the grave open not to liberate their long immured priſoners. There I may join them, but from thence they come not to me!"

Madame de Narbonne covered her face with her handkerchief, and reclined her head upon the table. Soon after ſhe raiſed it, dried her eyes, and thus proceeded:—

"The viſionary reſemblance of this young ſtranger to a dear and departed friend, long haunted my nightly dreams, and daily reveries; fortitude and reſignation were ſummoned to my aid, and I even endeavoured to perſuade myſelf into the belief that the nature of my lonely meditations in the receſs, rather than any real ſimilitude in the ſtranger, had bewildered my ideas, and given "to airy nothing, a local habitation and a name!"—The young perſon who had thus agitated me, appeared no more; and though I got my faithful Margaretta to make every poſſible enquiry, my hopes were, as in other caſes, fruſtrated, and my attempts at information ineffectual. Jacqueline had once ſaid, that the gentleman, who proved her protector from the ſnare laid for me, reſembled Mr. Montague, though handſomer in every reſpect. This

intelligence

intelligence almoſt convinced me that the former ſcene was no deception; it ſtruck me as ſingular, and the firſt day Mr. Montague was able to leave his bed for an hour or two, I determined to examine his face and figure with attention. The reſult was deciſive, and carried ſuch a degree of conviction, as to occaſion, at different times, that ſort of fixed and penſive obſervation which you remarked in my manner when in company with the Engliſhman.—Are you acquainted with any particulars of his hiſtory? or can you prevail with his friend Haſtings to enter upon the ſubject?—I confeſs the detail would be a ſatisfaction to me;—for, alas! I know not what to think, or how to reconcile ſo many apparent incongruities!"

Plunged in a labyrinth of uncertain conjecture, Charlotte heard not the laſt words of Madame de Narbonne till a repetition of them recalled her wandering thoughts to the preſent moment; ſhe then apologized for her abſence, and added that ſhe did not deſpair of obtaining this requeſt; and doubted not but Mr. Haſtings would readily comply with any thing in his power to give her pleaſure.

Madame de Clermont's voice was now heard approaching; the Counteſs wiſhed to avoid her; ſhe therefore haſtily retreated from her dreſſing-room,

room, and Charlotte, ſoftly opening a private-door, retired to a ſolitary walk in the garden.

In the narration of Madame de Narbonne, ſhe had found much to increaſe the aſtoniſhment and curioſity formerly excited by her own remarks on the unaccountable reſemblance exiſting between St. Julian and that lady. Here, however, the caſe was altered; the Counteſs ſpoke not of herſelf, but of his likeneſs to another perſon; it muſt, therefore, as Charlotte had already ſuppoſed, conſiſt in a family ſimilitude to ſome of her neareſt relations—probably that very brother ſhe was ſaid to have ſo deeply lamented!—Circumſtances of this kind were not uncommon, though perhaps not quite of ſo evident a nature. St. Julian, in their laſt interview, had repeatedly conjured her to obſerve a profound ſilence relative to every thing reſpecting himſelf that had then occurred; this ſhe had ſolemnly engaged to do, and could not forfeit her veracity, whatever might depend upon it.—St. Julian, beſides, had refuſed to give any account of himſelf; what, therefore, could ſhe tell the Counteſs, were ſhe even at liberty to do it?—As to mentioning the circumſtance of the picture, and his behaviour on that occaſion, it could be of no other ſervice than ſhewing the Counteſs ſhe had been guilty of duplicity, in the narrative given of the

the manner in which it returned into her poſſeſſion, and likewiſe convincing St. Julian that ſhe was unworthy of future confidence, ſhould they meet hereafter, by committing ſo egregious a breach of promiſe. Of ſuch a meeting, however, there was now little probability: he and the maſter of the Caſtle were of oppoſite parties, and civil war, in all its genuine horrors, was raging more dreadfully than ever in the vicinity of Narbonne. Were ſhe, therefore, weak enough to let any of her converſation with St. Julian tranſpire, it would give birth to a tormenting curioſity, which the ſituation of the times might for ever render impoſſible to gratify, and thus be the means of adding the miſeries of ſuſpenſe to thoſe other diſtreſſes of which the Counteſs already laboured under the preſſure.

Fraught with this idea, Charlotte determined to let matters take their courſe, till developed by the hand of futurity.

To this reſolution ſhe ſubmitted more readily, becauſe a contrary conduct could be of little conſequence, as ſhe underſtood, from the tenor of Madame's converſation, that thoſe ſhe ſo deeply lamented had long been conſigned to the peaceful oblivion of the grave, and therefore could neither be injured nor aſſiſted by her further interference.

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To obtain the particulars of Mr. Montague's hiſtory, however, appeared a more eaſy undertaking. This was not a prohibited topic at leaſt; and, if nothing material ſhould accrue to ſatisfy curioſity from the narrative, it would, in that caſe, alſo put an end to any expectations which otherwiſe might hereafter be formed on the ſubject.

She therefore prevailed upon M. de Clermont to join in making the requeſt.

In ſpite of his blunt, and ſometimes ſarcaſtic manner, Mr. Haſtings poſſeſſed a good underſtanding, a clear head, and a heart in which the milk of human kindneſs was ever abundantly copious. He reprobated, and ſeverely too, the follies and vices of the world; but in that wide world there was not a ſuffering individual whoſe miſeries he would not have endeavoured to alleviate, at the expence of his own eaſe, or even happineſs, if neceſſary. He had long obſerved, and commiſerated the ſituation of Madame de Narbonne's mind; he ſaw that ſhe and peace were at variance, and he wiſhed to convince her there were others in the univerſe who, perhaps, had groaned under misfortunes equally heavy with her own. Nothing ſo effectually detaches the memory from afflictive recollections, as the knowledge that we are not the only wretched beings in the extenſive circle of human ſorrows.

Like

Like the poor ſailor who, falling from the maſt-head, thanked Heaven he had only broke one arm, and not both, we feel grateful to Providence, not that our fellow-creature is more unfortunate than ourſelves, but that we have been ſo mercifully dealt with, as to be leſs ſo than him.

Rochefoucault's well-known maxim admits, in my opinion, of two explanations; and thoſe will be given according to the corrupted, or uncorrupted ſtate of the perſon's heart who repeats them.

Happy to try the effects of compariſon on Madame de Narbonne, Mr. Haſtings readily conſented to oblige the ladies; and, on the firſt favourable opportunity, attended their ſummons to give the detail of his friend Montague's uncommon and eventful hiſtory, which he commenced in the following terms.

CHAP. II.

THE HISTORY OF MR. MONTAGUE.

"Even a parent's rights loſe their inſtinctive powers, when tyranny takes place of reaſon and affection."

MRS. ROBINSON'S WALSINGHAM.

"FROM ties of conſanguinity, and a long acquaintance with the parties concerned, I am, perhaps," ſaid Mr. Haſtings, "better qualified than moſt people to enter upon the detail I have now undertaken to give you. My friend Montague's hiſtory, though ſhort, probably exhibits ſome of the moſt ſtriking inſtances of retributive juſtice hitherto met with in the wide and extenſive train of human vice, or human calamity. The world

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is ſaid, by ſome, to be a good world, and it may be ſo—it was not of man's creation!—But we know he is deviliſhly ingenious in the ſyſtem of perverſion, and till philoſophers or chemiſts diſcover a medicine ſufficiently potent to expel raſcality—why, faith, I fear reformers will find their taſk an Herculean one.

"However, as individuals are not now-a-days gifted with ſupernatural abilities, true wiſdom conſiſts in conforming to unavoidable evils; and yet, when I recollect ſome circumſtances of the fellow's ſtory, I am often tempted to forget this ſame convenient piece of wiſdom, and to ſend the world, and moſt part of its inhabitants, to the congenial enjoyments of a warmer climate, without the benefit of Clergy."

The eyes of Haſtings gliſtened as he ſpoke; he ſtarted ſuddenly from his chair, traverſed the room backwards and forwards, in a hurried and agitated manner, for a few moments, reſumed his ſeat again, and continued the narrative in theſe words—

"The recital of the following incidents may not, perhaps, make ſo deep an impreſſion on the minds of others, as a knowledge of them has done on my own. I ſhall endeavour, however, to perform my beſt; for, independent of the wiſh I feel to gratify my preſent auditors, the intereſt I have ever

ever taken in this young man's affairs, without exaggerating his merit, will lead me with pleaſure to do the ſubject that juſtice which I well know he deſerves; and therefore, if you will accept of a "round unvarniſhed tale," ſuch as a blunt matter of fact hiſtorian, like myſelf, is capable of giving, why it is of courſe much at your ſervice.

" * Some years ago there lived at Brompton, in England, a woman, whoſe profeſſion was the taking off their parents' hands the children of an unauthorized paſſion—her name was Sarah Welland.

" The people of intrigue knew the name of this perſon familiarly; her profits were conſiderable. Her cuſtom was to receive the devoted infant from a third perſon, without aſking any queſtions; ſhe took with it a certain price for the maintenance and care of it for life, and neither the parents nor the pariſh were any more to hear of it. What muſt have been their hearts who could deliver up their children to this certain deſtruction!—The expoſing infants among the old Romans, againſt which we ſo much exclaim, was leſs criminal: the child there might eſcape; but in this caſe the very bargain ſold its blood. Parents, who themſelves felt no compaſſion or humanity, could not ſuppoſe there

* Taken almoſt verbatim from a ſtory in real life.

would be either in a ſtranger; and as the whole price was paid at once, the ſooner the infant periſhed, the greater was the profit. It were happy if there were at the preſent time no murderers of this ſtamp, for there will never want unnatural parents. The miſerable ſon of the Earl of Rivers* is but one inſtance among thouſands, that when a perſon is deprived of the common benefits of ſociety, and devoted to everlaſting ſhame by the particular circumſtances of his birth, his parents are his implacable enemies.

" One child that entered the bloody walls of Welland eſcaped, for ſhe herſelf died that evening. The ſmiling innocence of the little victim pleaded even with thoſe who had, perhaps, before been the inſtruments of her barbarity; they had no intereſt in its death, and they carried it to thoſe who had, at that time, the care of the poor. The deſerted infant was taken from houſe to houſe, and begging ſupported it till there ſhould be a veſtry. The careful overſeer poſtponed a fortnight, that which ſhould have come on the day following, that the pariſh might have a chance to be freed from the incumbrance;—but this little wretch was to live.

* The unfortunate Richard Savage, Eſq. ſon of the Counteſs of Macclesfield and that Nobleman.

" The

"The nameleſs infant had eſcaped the only hands from which it could fail to meet compaſſion: its throat bled with a wound inflicted by the hand of its father, but not mortal. All were charmed with it, and all ſtruck with commiſeration. Thoſe who had not fortunes, declared that, were they rich, they would adopt it; but ſuch as had the power, found the inclination leſs fervent; even they, however, contributed their ſhillings. The veſtry met at length, and the child was living. The officers took it into their care, and the world heard no more of it!—Pity is a ſhort-lived virtue:—the incident was ſoon forgot; and, if any thought upon the infant, probably they ſuppoſed it devoted to another deſtruction.

"Nine years after this, a Chieftain of the Frazers, a man of humanity and honour, ſaw a boy naked upon one of the moſt barren of the Scottiſh mountains. He was ſitting; his eyes were ſwimming in ſorrow, though no tear had fallen from them; they were turned up to heaven with reſignation, but with almoſt a ſpirit of upbraiding; and in his hand was a root of graſs, his food.

"The maſter of the place, touched with compaſſion, ordered him to his houſe; he put him on the habit of the highlands, employed him in his ſervice, and he was called a Frazer. He was aſked

how he came thither, and how he became ſo miſerable? but could make little anſwer. He knew nothing of father, or mother, or friend, or place of birth; his firſt remembrance was of an ancient woman, with whom he had lived in a cabin; her death had ſent him from one to another of the highlanders, and at laſt the loſs of his only remaining friend had left him perfectly deſtitute.

"His maſter found in the boy, as he grew up, ſenſe and ſpirit, and the ſincereſt gratitude. He took him from meaner ſervices, and placed him near his perſon. Few ſaw him; but all who did, ſaid they perceived in him ſomething very ſingular:—his behaviour was modeſt, but his words were full of underſtanding; his face was handſome, and his whole figure and air conveyed an idea of ſomething infinitely ſuperior to the preſent condition of his fortunes.

"Our late wandering fugitive had now gradually fixed himſelf in the affections of his more than parent; who, like moſt of his countrymen, having been well educated, found a humane gratification in contributing to the information, diſplaying the genius, and cultivating the talents of his young *protegé*, whoſe progreſs was ſuch as evinced the gentleman's powers of diſcrimination were by no means of an inferior quality.

"Frazer

" Frazer had been ſome time under the protection of his benevolent benefactor, when the conteſt, which Great Britain was moſt unfortunately engaged in with her American Colonies, raged with the fierceſt violence. This gentleman had long reſided beyond the Atlantic ocean; he had made a handſome fortune there; he looked upon it as the part of the globe deareſt to him, Scotland excepted (for the prejudices of the Caledonian had not radically changed with a change of climate), and he conſequently took what we, as Engliſhmen, called the wrong ſide of the queſtion in that fatal quarrel. Enthuſiaſtic in his ideas of liberty, and anxious to preſerve his property, a great part of which ſtill remained in that quarter of the world, the Highland Chieftain once more determined to croſs the ocean. There was no doubt of his adopted nameſake following his ſteps wherever they led. His temper, though generally mild, would have been warmed with a thirſt for military glory, independent of the grateful and filial affection that attached him to his friend and inſtructor. They landed near Charleſtown, after a long, dangerous, and unpleaſant voyage. In a few months more the elder Frazer joined the Provincial army, in a military capacity, and, accompanied by his favourite youth, took the field.

" They were in two actions that proved ſucceſsful, and young Frazer had ſo diſtinguiſhed himſelf in both, that he was marked for particular favour. In a third engagement his hand was not leſs active; but a ſingle arm could not command ſucceſs in oppoſition to the flower of the Britiſh troops, and the fearful odds of three to one!—He fled among the routed Americans, and in an hour was in a place of ſafety; a retreat where neither friend could be likely to find, nor enemy to reach him, where he could neither be forced nor betrayed.

" In this place, as he was leaning upon his ſword, and reſting againſt a tree, he ſaw two perſons enter haſtily: the one an old man flying, the other a younger one in purſuit of him; what aſtoniſhed the warrior was, that they appeared both of the victorious party. He ſtood a moment, expecting they would fall together upon him; but they regarded none except each other. The old man, finding his feet would not give him ſecurity, turned upon the purſuer, and put himſelf in a poſture of defence.—Frazer was too much a hero to look upon ſuch an unequal encounter: as the old man was on the brink of deſtruction, he ruſhed in between them.—'I know nothing of your quarrel,' ſaid he to the younger, 'but let me diſpute it in his place;—he is not a match for your youth and vigour.'—No more

words

words paſſed; the old man ſtood aſide, and his champion conquered.

" The perſon whom Frazer had thus ſaved by his timely interpoſition, made him all poſſible acknowledgments, and told him he would return the obligation by preſerving him. He propoſed taking him to his quarters in the evening, and changing his dreſs, for he was then in an American uniform; and promiſed to adopt him for his ſon. He concluded with extolling his gallantry in the higheſt terms, and with obſerving it was a pity a perſon of ſo much courage and honour ſhould be a rebel to the mother country.

' The Americans,' replied Frazer, ' do not fight againſt their King becauſe they are diſloyal; but becauſe they are forced to do ſo, in defence of their beſt privileges as citizens, and their rights and liberties as men. Their Commanders have a double claim to their ſervices, when duty to their country demands exertion in behalf of objects ſo materially connected with all that ought to be dear to them. I, for my part, have particular reaſons to conſider obedience and attachment to a ſuperior as the firſt of virtues.'

" He pauſed, wiped away a tear, and then continued thus:—

'None had ſo much right to that compliance as mine; nor could I have accepted of your propoſed kindneſs, but that I ſaw him fall!—Now I am free; and if you will receive a friendleſs orphan into your protection, I will be as faithful to you as I have been to him.'

"Again he pauſed, and ſeemed deeply agitated. The perſon he had preſerved was moved extremely with his ſpeech; there was ſomething in the manner more than the words that charmed him; he embraced him, took him back with him, changed his habit, and brought him to England, where his intereſt obtained him a free pardon. Frazer lived with this man of honour as a ſon; the family conſiſted of themſelves and a daughter: but the latter was then in the country, and the old gentleman wiſhed to ſhew his young friend the metropolis before they joined her.

"After a few weeks ſpent in London and the neighbourhood, they took their departure for one of the weſtern counties, where the old warrior was poſſeſſed of extenſive property.

"As they approached the end of their journey, the evening was far advanced; but the moon roſe with uncommon brightneſs, and diſcovered, amidſt a great range of foreſt, an ancient and venerable ſtructure, majeſtically rearing its white turrets above

above the woods that ſurrounded it. A female figure was perceptible at no great diſtance, wandering through the trees with a ſlow pace, while her long white robe gracefully waved in the evening breeze as ſhe moved along. At length the ſound of footſteps reached her, and ſhe ſtopped in a liſtening attitude, uncertain from whence they came.

" The gentlemen had left their carriage at the entrance of the foreſt; they obſerved the apprehenſions which agitated her; they haſtily advanced, and in the next inſtant Frazer ſaw her locked in the old man's embrace!—After the firſt tranſports of their meeting were over, he was introduced as the ſaviour of her aged parent. This was recommendation ſufficient, and he ſeemed equally dear to both. The lady appeared to be paſt the bloom of early youth, and was not more diſtinguiſhed for her amiable temper and mental accompliſhments, than an air of deep melancholy which never forſook her countenance.

" Our young hero, now no longer Frazer, but henceforth ſtyled Montague, after his patron, endeavoured, by every poſſible means, to diſpel the inward ſorrow that preyed upon her ſpirits; but though ſhe was grateful for the attempt, the cauſe,

however at times ſuſpended, never could be finally eradicated.

" Her father had never yet entered minutely into the particulars of his reſcue; conſiderations of a private nature had hitherto reſtrained him, leſt the delicate ſtate of her health might materially ſuffer by a relation of ſome circumſtances connected with it. One day, however, ſeeing her more compoſed than uſual, he gradually led to the ſubject, and after imagining her properly prepared for what was to follow, thus proceeded:—

' It was the wretch who diſhonoured you, my deareſt daughter, that ſought my life for the reſentment I had ſhewn againſt his barbarity. What I have ſaid,' continued he, turning to Montague, 'muſt reach no other ear; but I conſider you as a ſon. This is the cauſe of Matilda's melancholy—I wiſh to have no concealments with you: ſhe was deluded under a ſolemn engagement of marriage; ſhe had a child, whom her abandoned betrayer cauſed to be deſtroyed; and he would have added my murder to his ſon's, had not you prevented him, becauſe, ſome years ago, I ſought to bring him to juſtice.—Alas! how long will revenge live in bad men's minds!'

" Here the old gentleman ſtopped, and wiped off a tear, while Matilda, covering her face, leaned

her head in an agony of ſorrow on the table. The former ſoon again reſumed the diſcourſe; and as he and the youth ſpoke on the ſubject, they commiſerated the fate of the unfortunate infant.—Young Montague was ſtrangely moved with the recital.

'Perhaps,' ſaid he, 'if my memory would reach to the years of childhood, ſome ſuch lot was mine!'

"He then repeated the unaccountable obſcurity of his birth, which he had already frequently mentioned to the family, and, in addition to that, he now ſhewed a ſcar upon his throat, which, he told them, ſome inhuman hand had inflicted before the period of his earlieſt remembrance.

"The father and daughter ſeemed inſtantly ſtruck with one and the ſame idea; the varying colour on the cheeks of the latter beſpoke the apprehenſion of ill-grounded hope, and the torturing anguiſh of ſuſpenſe. They looked at each other for a moment with all the terrors of expected diſappointment ſtrongly portrayed on every feature, and then haſtily riſing, left the aſtoniſhed Montague without further ceremony. After about half an hour's abſence they both returned again, and the old man, taking his hand, thus ſolemnly addreſſed him:—

'To us the ways of Heaven are, it is true, inexplicable; but firmly convinced that nothing happens in this world without its immediate permiſſion—convinced too that it governs the univerſe with unerring wiſdom, and conſequently that all it ordains muſt be for the beſt, it is our duty to ſubmit, without repining, to its diſpenſations; and where comprehenſion fails us, at leaſt humbly to adore in ſilence. Hear pleaſing and unpleaſing things together:—The perſon from whoſe ſword you generouſly ſaved me, was—your father!—There is your mother!—kneel to her for a bleſſing!'——

"And ſurely," cried Charlotte, energetically, interrupting Haſtings, "and ſurely he would receive it; for who could avoid looking upon the righteous parricide as the appointment of Divine Providence?"

Haſtings had again left his chair, and again was traverſing the room in a hurrying manner. He reſeated himſelf, and continued his narrative.

"My friend Montague is indeed worthy of every bleſſing; and what is uſually ſtyled ſo in the common acceptation of the word, has not been withheld from him: maternal affection, and the gifts of Fortune are his in an eminent degree.—But, unhappily, his mind is formed with too delicate feelings

feelings to reflect on the moſt ſtriking incident of his life with indifference; and there are intruſive moments of recollection, too powerful to reſiſt ſenſations bordering on remorſe for the paſt, and fraught with the bittereſt regret, that his arm ſhould have ſent a father to eternity, with all his crimes on his head, unrepented and unatoned!—He thinks his grandfather might have been reſcued without having had recourſe to ſo dreadful an alternative, and the intended murderer, perhaps in time convinced of his errors, become a ſincere penitent, a reſpectable member of ſociety!—But in theſe hours of unmerited ſelf-accuſation, poor Montague forgets the long courſe of wickedneſs perſevered in by the wretch he deplores. He reflects not that a vicious habit, indulged in for ſeventeen years, degenerates into a ſecond nature, and hardens the mind too much in depravity, to leave the ſmalleſt chance for any thing like reformation. Of this truth, indeed, he ſometimes ſeems convinced, when we argue the matter together, but then that conviction is but temporary; and his health is gradually undermining beneath the preſſure of too much ſenſibility and an unmerited fate. Change of climate, the common remedy for complaints like his, has been ordered by the Faculty; no preſcription could have coincided more with the wiſhes of his mother;

mother; ſhe dotes on her ſon, but, circumſtanced as ſhe was, found it impoſſible, or at leaſt improper, to indulge in ſenſations of maternal tenderneſs in a country where her deviation from virtue (if, every thing conſidered, it can be called ſo) had been cautiouſly concealed from the eye of public inveſtigation. Amongſt ſtrangers, and in a different kingdom, that cauſe of reſtraint would no longer exiſt, and ſhe would, of courſe, be at liberty to give vent to her feelings, while freedom was allowed her to watch over his health, and attend him, if neceſſary, with all the tender ſolicitude of a mother.

"They have now ſpent eight years in different parts of the Continent, though not more than as many months in this neighbourhood. A particular circumſtance fixed their abode at firſt on the other ſide of the kingdom: the mother of Montague's unworthy father came from a noble Houſe in that quarter, and the young man ardently wiſhed to be known to the members of it. Diſappointment, however, attended this expectation: the family was either extinct, or removed to a diſtance, and no ſatisfactory intelligence could be obtained reſpecting it. One old man, indeed, who had once been a domeſtic at their Caſtle, ſtill remained in the vicinity; but his information amounted to nothing more

more than they already knew. He was ſtruck, however, with a reſemblance he ſaw, or fancied he ſaw, between my friend and the laſt male poſſeſſor of the title, and eagerly enquired if he was related to that Nobleman. Montague, from prudential motives, declined anſwering this queſtion; and the old man apologized for having aſked it, by ſaying that he thought it might be the caſe, from the gentleman's appearance; becauſe the individuals of his maſter's houſe were remarkable for bearing a ſtrong family likeneſs to each other.

"Had Montague been ignorant of the relationſhip here exiſting, the manner and earneſt look of the old domeſtic would probably have ſurpriſed him. Yet I know not why either; for the features of the face are not to be altered by a change of climate, however it may affect the conſtitution or complexion; Nature there ſeals her impreſſion in indelible characters for purpoſes beſt known to herſelf, and which, indeed, we ourſelves have ſometimes ſeen lead to moſt important and unexpected diſcoveries. Beſides——"

"Pray, Sir," interrupted Madame de Narbonne, in a faint voice, and raiſing her head from the table as ſhe ſpoke, "may I beg leave to enquire the name of that family to whom the Chevalier Montague is related?"

"Certainly,

"Certainly, Madame," replied Mr. Haſtings, bowing; "it is the Count St. Cyprian's, whoſe Chateau is in the Province of——"

Here he was again interrupted by a ſudden exclamation of anguiſh from the Counteſs, followed by a deep ſigh; ſhe ſeemed to pant for breath, and ſlowly riſing, with trembling ſteps ſhe left the room.

Charlotte was preparing to offer her aſſiſtance; but ſhe waved her hand to forbid it, as ſhe paſſed her.

"Good God!" cried Haſtings, "whence proceeds this diſorder? Have I unconſciouſly occaſioned it, ladies?"

"Upon my word I know nothing about it," retorted Madame de Clermont, with an air of fretful impatience; "but this I know, that Madame la Compteſs is eternally indiſpoſed, either in body or mind: for my part, I have no idea of thoſe very delicate perſons, who are always upon the high rope of ſenſibility, and yet can exiſt, from choice, in the dreary incloſure of theſe gloomy walls.—Heigh-ho!—thank Heaven, nothing would ail me were I only on the other ſide of them."

Charlotte regarded her with an uſual look of pity; but the glance of her huſband was better underſtood, and ſhe ſtopped ſhort in her harangue.

"Madame

" Madame de Narbonne's complaints," ſaid M. de Clermont, ſternly, " merit compaſſion, and are entitled to reſpect; they neither proceed from affectation nor folly, but are the conſequence of a weak conſtitution ſtruggling under the heavy hand of Misfortune. Unfeeling minds ought not to mention them ſo lightly."—He turned to Mr. Haſtings, and added, " I believe Madame de Narbonne was early in life threatened with a conſumptive habit; you, Sir, have not, I am perſuaded, ſaid any thing directly to afflict her; yet, perhaps, ſome part of your narrative might have had that effect; for I obſerved her, more than once, deeply agitated during the recital, and as any uncommon emotion generally brings on a return of her old diſorder, that may perhaps be the caſe at preſent.—I much fear it will maſter her at laſt!"

" I hope not!—I hope not!" exclaimed Mr. Haſtings, with energy; " good people are not ſo commonly met with in this ſame bleſſed world of our's, to make us eaſily part with thoſe who come under that denomination;—let us fly, my dear Mademoiſelle de Cordet, and endeavour to learn what is become of the Counteſs."

" No," replied Charlotte, withdrawing her hand, which he had haſtily ſeized for that purpoſe, " no, Monſieur, I believe it will be better for me

to

to go alone. From real affection and attachment to this amiable woman, I have lately made it my buſineſs to ſtudy her diſpoſition and temper a good deal; and I find in her hours of diſtreſs (of which, though unacquainted with the cauſe, I confeſs ſhe has but too many), that ſhe wiſhes to avoid intruſion. The efforts ſhe makes to exert herſelf, when liable to obſervation, contrary to their general effect in diſorders like her's, only ſerve to increaſe her former depreſſion of ſpirits when the neceſſity ceaſes that occaſioned them. I will therefore repair to her anti-chamber, and procure any intelligence I can obtain from Jacqueline."

"Go then, my dear girl," ſaid M. de Clermont, "fly, and make the wiſhed-for enquiries."

"Heigh-ho!" again ſighed Madame de Clermont, "I——"

Here her huſband once more looked at her; ſhe yawned, and walked to the window.

Haſtings conducted Charlotte to the other end of the gallery, and then returned to his friend Montague, whom he had not ſeen ſince the morning.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet waited but a few minutes in the anti-chamber before Jacqueline made her appearance; ſhe carried a ſmall bottle of lavender in her hand, from which ſhe had been adminiſtering ſome drops to her lady, who was, ſhe ſaid, much

much relieved by them, and talked already of joining the company ſhe had recently quitted.

"Walk in, Mademoiſelle," added the girl, as ſhe opened the door, "Madame has been enquiring for you."

When Charlotte approached, the Counteſs held out her hand, and with a languid look entreated ſhe would not be alarmed.

"For you know," continued ſhe, attempting to force a ſmile, "my ſpirits and health always ſympathize with each other; conſequently when one is affected, the other ſeldom remains well. But how is Montague—this intereſting Montague, whom it ſeems we may almoſt reckon half a Frenchman?—Alas!—but no!" ſhe pauſed, and endeavoured to retain the aſſumed appearance of cheerfulneſs, which, at every word, was apparently on the point of yielding to the ill-concealed anguiſh it ſtruggled to ſuppreſs; "but no! I muſt not at preſent, I believe, indulge the wiſh to ſee him—I am rather unequal to the taſk of ſparing comfort juſt now to others. You are, however, a good ſubſtitute; bring me then information, my dear girl, how he feels himſelf to-day. You know I have not made any perſonal enquiries ſince yeſterday."

Charlotte told her that ſhe had anticipated her wiſh, having ſtopped at his door with Mr. Haſtings

in

in her way hither. The account ſhe gave of his ſituation afforded the Counteſs much pleaſure, and the two friends ſoon after joined the party below ſtairs.

There Madame de Narbonne apologized for her late abrupt departure, in a manner that evidently ſhewed her diſlike to enter upon the cauſe of it; and the topic was conſequently dropped by the reſt of the company.

Their ſilence, however, was no proof of inattention—it was not difficult to perceive that ſome unknown ſource of uneaſineſs preyed upon her mind; and of courſe the whole tenor of her conduct ſtill more deeply intereſted the few friends whoſe penetration remarked her fruitleſs attempts at concealment. De la Ville's name never eſcaped her lips, nor did her gueſts intrude it officiouſly upon her, for they had long obſerved it was a ſubject repugnant to her feelings.

Of this man's fate no ſatisfactory intelligence had yet arrived; but while he remained abſent, and apparently forgotten, the Counteſs ſeemed to recruit both in health and ſpirits;—that theſe, however, equally ſuffered by the ſenſibility of her temper, admitted not of diſpute, and to this ſenſibility was naturally aſcribed the unuſual agitation of mind evinced on her next interview with Mr. Montague.

No

No doubt it was, while ſilently dwelling on ſome peculiar circumſtances of his eventful life, that her eyes ſwam in tears, as abſorbed in reflection, ſhe fixed them on his face with a melancholy look of penſive dejection.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

" Upon the King! let us our lives, our ſouls,
" Our debts, our careful wives, our children, and
" Our ſins lay on the King; he muſt bear all!"

SHAKESPEAR.

LONG ere this period, Mr. Haſtings had become a general favourite at the Caſtle of Narbonne. Prior to the time of his appearance at the *fête champêtre*, he had arrived in France on a viſit to the Montagues, with whom he had already ſpent ſome weeks when that entertainment took place.

Not more attached to his young friend by the ties of blood, than the finer ligaments of affection, he never was happier than in his company.

Old Mr. Montague had for ſome time paid the debt of nature, and his daughter ſtill mourned his loſs

loſs with filial regret. Conſtitutionally of a retired diſpoſition, misfortunes, ſuch as ſhe had ſuſtained, were not of a deſcription to give her ſpirits a gayer bent. Society, beyond very narrow limits, was indeed irkſome to her; and though anxious to procure her ſon every poſſible indulgence, ſhe rigidly refuſed to partake of any herſelf.

Of independent fortune and eccentric manners, Mr. Haſtings rambled over the globe, a citizen of the world. It was impoſſible not to eſteem the innate worth of his mind; and the peculiarities he diſplayed, ſtill farther ſecured an intereſt in the hearts of the great nation, ſince it ſtrongly marked the features of a country highly ranked, at preſent, in the judgment of thoſe he uſually aſſociated with. As for his own ſentiments, he held the national character of the French in the utmoſt contempt, and ſincerely gave the majority of them to the devil ten times in a day.

Nevertheleſs, he was willing to allow that no ſpot on the habitable globe probably contained more inſtances of individual merit, or perſons for whom he had a higher reſpect. But it muſt be acknowledged that his opinion of human nature was not of a very flattering deſcription, ſince the number of thoſe who poſſeſſed his regard, even where he allowed

allowed partial inſtances of worth to be moſt prevalent, was by no means extenſive.

A fiery democrat was one day ſporting his opinions with all the conſequential airs aſſumed by the new promulgators of Republicaniſm; he ſeemed to conſider violence of geſture and vociferation good ſubſtitutes for ſound reaſoning and common ſenſe; and proceeded, with amazing volubility, to depreciate all monarchial forms of government, from the beginning of the world to the preſent period; "when the multitude was become too enlightened, implicitly to ſubmit the direction of the many to the will of a ſingle individual; when the ſovereignty of the people beſpoke the reign of free-born liberty unſhackled by reſtraint from the capricious hand of an inſolent deſpot; when the empty pomp of pride, and the tinſel vanity of human grandeur were laid aſide, and man, only acquiring importance in proportion to his real merit, roſe ſuperior to the trifling *eclat* derived from the adventitious circumſtances of rank or fortune."—He ſpoke of crowned heads, *en maſs*, with contempt; and averred, from the immaculate Catherine the Second, to his late moral Majeſty of Pruſſia, that the mighty Potentates of the earth were inferior, from the very nature of their birth, ſituation, and education, to the common run of their

their fellow-creatures, inaſmuch as they were, from the very firſt, deprived of the advantages enjoyed by the loweſt peaſant, of ſpringing from healthy, robuſt parents; being expoſed to the viciſſitudes of human life, ſtruggling with which is often productive of ſelf-command and fortitude of mind; and laſtly, an exemption from all chance of corruption by the poiſonous breath of Flattery; or, if Nature has given a good conſtitution, getting it ruined afterwards by the enervating indulgencies of luxury and vice."

Thus the orator proceeded with a rhyme of phraſes, the cant of the times learned by rote, and perhaps might have continued in the ſame ſtrain, unheeded by his auditors, had he only remained within his depth; but, unfortunately, he happened to mention ſomething about the *Cours plenieres*, held in former times, which plainly ſhewed that he was himſelf ignorant of their nature, as well as the ſubject ſo fluently diſcourſed upon. This diſcovery entertained the elder Mademoiſelle de Clermont; and turning to Mr. Haſtings, with the air of a perſon ſolicitous for inſtruction, ſhe entreated he would inform her what were the ſtyle and faſhion of theſe ſame *Cours plenieres*.

"For," added ſhe, ſlily, "though a native of the country where they were originally known, I

am ſo ſtupid as to be little acquainted with the hiſtory of my own nation, and am perſuaded Monſieur Larong may probably likewiſe benefit by the intelligence, even ſhould it come from a foreigner."

"It is indeed," replied Haſtings, accompanying his words with a ſarcaſtic look at the Republican orator, "it is indeed very neceſſary that people ſhould be acquainted with the hiſtory of their own country in all its ſtages, before they attempt to commence reformers of its exiſting Government, the deficiencies and errors of which, they are, perhaps, as incompetent to form a proper judgment of, as to rectify them when known.—But why, my dear Madam, apply to me on ſubjects of this nature?—Here is a gentleman, no doubt, much better qualified to enter on ſuch topics, if we may judge by the elaborate harangue he has ſo obligingly favoured us with.—Pray, Sir," addreſſing the confounded democrat, "have the goodneſs to ſatisfy the lady on theſe points; for ſurely, amongſt your other profound and learned inveſtigations, you muſt frequently have been convinced that female curioſity is nearly as difficult to ſilence, as it is to make ſome people ſpeak common ſenſe, or hold their tongue if they cannot."

The unlucky reformer, thus applied to, endeavoured in vain to acquit himſelf with ſome degree of

of applauſe, but it would not do; like a horſe in a quick-ſand, the farther he advanced, the more impoſſible it appeared to extricate himſelf, till Mademoiſelle de Cordet, pitying his ſituation, inſenſibly drew Mr. Haſtings into a converſation, which afforded the reſt of the company both amuſement and inſtruction.

"You ſay, Sir," addreſſing the now mortified and ſilent demagogue, "that Kings, from their birth, and the very nature of their education, muſt be, nay you even inſiſt upon it, have been uniformly inferior in abilities to their fellow-mortals; and that it is merely from rank and power they derive all their ſuppoſed influence and pre-eminence. In the aggregate, I grant you this axiom may have ſome foundation; but I deny its force individually. Not to mention the great and good Henry IV. whoſe ſingle character, as a Monarch, is almoſt ſufficient to atone for the errors of ten ſucceeding generations of crowned heads; King Pepin, who flouriſhed ſo far back as the year 750, furniſhes a ſtriking inſtance to the contrary of your aſſertion;—you have heard of him I preſume, Sir?"

"*Parbleu!* certainly, Monſieur," replied the profeſſor of republicaniſm, who had now had time to recollect himſelf again; "Pepin—King Pepin! yes,

yes, yes, I have often heard of him;—he was a deviliſh tall fellow, I believe—and ſuckled by a ſhe-wolf, I think;—but my memory rather fails me at preſent——"

"Why faith, Sir, I agree with you as to the defects of your memory," replied his antagoniſt, laughing, "and hope the deficiency mounts no higher.—According to your ſyſtem too, the generality of crowned heads are reared on the ſame food; but no doubt you reformers will ſubſtitute a milder regimen, when the bloody one in faſhion is exhauſted. However, Sir, at the requeſt of theſe ladies, and ſince your memory is thus defective, I ſhall endeavour to aſſiſt it, if you pleaſe.—King Pepin was neither ſuckled by a ſhe-wolf, nor a deviliſh tall fellow; but, on the contrary, ſo low in ſtature that he was ſurnamed the *Short*, and ſome courtiers found him ſo remarkably ſo, that they even made his ſize a ſubject of ridicule; a freedom which, I ſuſpect, it would not be quite ſafe to venture upon with the ſacred perſons of our preſent Legiſlators, who pique themſelves ſo much upon the levelling plan of equality. The freedom of thoſe courtiers, however, reaching the ears of King Pepin, he determined to eſtabliſh his authority by ſome extraordinary feats, and an opportunity ſoon preſented itſelf.

"In

" In an entertainment which he gave, of a fight between a bull and a lion, the latter had got his antagoniſt under, when Pepin turning towards his Nobility, ſaid—' Which of you dare go and part, or kill thoſe furious beaſts ?"—The bare propoſal ſet them a ſhuddering, and very probably might have had the ſame effect, even now, on one half of the National Convention itſelf. Nobody made any anſwer.—' Then I'll be the man !' cried the Monarch ; and drawing his ſabre, leaped into the arena, made up to the lion, killed him, and without delay diſcharged ſuch a ſtroke at the bull, as left him dead on the ſpot ; the Court was equally amazed at ſuch courage and ſtrength, and the King, with an heroic loftineſs, ſaid to them—' David was little, yet he laid low the inſolent giant who had dared to diſpute with him !'

" Thus, Sir," continued Haſtings, looking at M. Larong, " with all due ſubmiſſion to your better judgment, you ſee it was poſſible for one King, at leaſt, to poſſeſs more real courage and fortitude of mind, than even the whole multitude of Frenchmen around him could boaſt.

" Different ages have different modes of amuſement, and perhaps this was juſt as innocent in its nature, though more dangerous to the principal performer, than thoſe now exhibited by the Conven-

tion, in that uſeful and entertaining piece of machinery, known at preſent by the name of the Guillotine.

" In regard to another exhibition of former days, I mean the *Cours plenieres*, I ſhall now, ladies, proceed to obey your injunctions. Thoſe famous aſſemblies were ſo called at which, on an invitation from the King, all the Lords were obliged to be preſent. They were held twice a year, at Chriſtmas and Eaſter; the occaſion was uſually a marriage, or ſome great rejoicings, and they laſted a week. Sometimes they were kept at the Prince's Palace, ſometimes at one of the chief cities, and ſometimes in an open field; but always at a place large enough conveniently to lodge all the Nobility in the kingdom.

" The ceremony was opened with a ſolemn maſs; for in thoſe days Frenchmen were not aſhamed to worſhip their Maker. At the beginning of it, the eccleſiaſtic who officiated, put the crown on the King's head, where it remained till he retired at night. During the whole time of the feſtival the King's meals were always in public, the Biſhops and moſt diſtinguiſhed Dukes ſitting at the table with him. There was a ſecond for the Abbots, the Counts, and other Nobles, and on both more confuſion, perhaps, than decency. Each courſe

courſe was carried away with flutes and hautboys playing before it. On ſerving the deſſert, twenty heralds at arms, each holding a rich goblet, called out three times, "Largeſs from the moſt potent of Kings!" and threw about gold and ſilver money, which was accompanied with ſhouts of the people tumultuouſly gathering it up, and the flouriſhes of trumpets.

"The afternoon diverſions were fiſhing, hunting, plays, rope-dancing, buffoons, jugglers, and pantomimes; the laſt, amid other excellencies in their art, had a wonderful talent at inſtructing dogs, bears, and monkies, training them up to imitate geſtures, actions, and paſtimes of all kinds, ſo as even to act a part of their dramas. Perhaps there are people in France not deficient in this ſcience at preſent. The truth of the Pythagorean ſyſtem, I believe, has often been confirmed ſince the commencement of the Revolution. However theſe ſhews, which were certainly very expenſive to the Prince, made one of the favourite exhibitions of thoſe aſſemblies, and without them the feſtival would not have been reliſhed—ſuch was the taſte of that age; and ſurely it cannot be eſteemed more cenſurable than that which is now eſtabliſhed, when the ſovereign people, to the ſacred tune of *Ca Ira*, demoliſh every thing before them, animate or in-

animate, merely in the temporary rage of doing ſomething *pour paſſer les tems.*

" The reign of the Carlovingians may be ſaid to be that of the *Cours plenieres.* The height of their magnificence was under Charles the Great; the Dukes and Lords reſorting thither from all the vaſt extent of his dominions, and many attended by a brilliant Court, and rivalling Kings themſelves in expence. So true it is, that Kings, Lords, and Commons feel the ſame univerſal inclination to become conſpicuous, when the power of doing ſo is within their reach.

" After Charles the Simple, this magnificence continually declined. Lewis, his ſon, and his grandſon, were not able, from the ſcantineſs of their income, to give theſe ſumptuous entertainments. Hugh Caput revived them; Robert continued them; and St. Louis, in other reſpects ſo inſenſible to grandeur, and ſo averſe to revelry, carried them to ſome exceſs.

" Charles VII. however, ſuppreſſed them, pleading his wars againſt the Engliſh; but the true reaſon was, their being extremely burthenſome to the State. The Nobility frequently ruined themſelves there by gaming, and the Monarch drained his Treaſury. He was obliged every time to give new clothing to his Officers, and thoſe of

the

the Queen and the Princes; from whence came the word *livery*, thoſe clothes being liveries, or delivered out at the King's expence; and that of the table and equipages, together with the donations and preſents, which he was under a kind of neceſſity of making to the people and the great men, roſe to immenſe ſums.

" If there was any veſſel on his beaufet particularly coſtly, or any very curious jewel in his crown, he could not well avoid making a preſent of them to ſomebody, as it would have been a treſpaſs againſt cuſtom; ſo that at this ſeaſon of profit and pleaſure, the company might have exclaimed " Eureka*!" with ſome juſtice.

" A wiſe economy, nevertheleſs, at length aboliſhed theſe ruinous aſſemblies, as indeed they were rather oſtentatious than neceſſary, or even of any good conſequence.

" The Monarch here, you muſt grant, corrected an abuſe that the multitude would gladly have continued; thus virtuous inclinations, for once, triumphed over " the force of *royal* education and *bad* example."

* Eureka---the exultation of Pythagoras when he found out the golden theorem.

"As to the appellation of *barbarous*, which this gentleman," bowing to M. Larong, "beſtows indiſcriminately on all crowned heads whatever, I confeſs I know not very well what to ſay. Human Nature is a ſad rogue, to be ſure; yet I cannot help ſuſpecting that the vices and depravity of the people often largely contribute towards obtaining this character for their Governors. Licentiouſneſs requires to be reſtrained; and the paſſions poſſeſſed by Kings, in common with their ſubjects, render them liable to miſtakes in the frequent diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, eſpecially where they have not the means of judging for themſelves, but muſt rely on the repreſentations of others probably intereſted in the deciſion.

"If unlimited power is not to be truſted with ſafety in the hands of one perſon, it certainly does not follow of courſe, that the ſame plenitude of command becomes leſs pernicious when equally at the diſcretion of five hundred."

"No, certainly not," replied Charlotte; "nor do I ſuppoſe, though no Royaliſt, in the common acceptation of the word—nor do I ſuppoſe there is any thing more criminal in a monarchial exhibition of pomp and magnificence, where it is meant to impreſs ideas of ſolemnity on ſome awful occaſion, ſuch as a religious feſtival, paſſing ſentence of death

death on a malefactor, or in the arrangement of ſome important national buſineſs—I ſay, I ſee nothing more blameworthy in ſuch a circumſtance than there is in a few members of the preſent Legiſlative Body parading the ſtreets of Paris, ſumptuouſly accoutred, and attended by a numerous train of followers dreſſed in the richeſt and gayeſt ſtyle; not to ſtrike awe into the guilty; not to convey thoſe ideas of ſolemnity, which ought ever to accompany the diſtributors of juſtice and order; not to accelerate the diſpatch of public buſineſs, but merely to—dine with ſome of their colleagues, or, perhaps, to admire the quick deciſive ſtroke of the guillotine, that laconic and ingenious executioner of revolutionary councils!"

While the ſubject was thus canvaſſed, a meſſenger arrived to inform the Clermonts that they were expected at home to receive ſome friends, who had come to viſit them on buſineſs of conſequence. As Charlotte's preſence, however, was not neceſſary, it was agreed ſhe ſhould remain at Narbonne, and ſhe retired to acquaint the Counteſs with this arrangement.

The Counteſs, as it frequently happened, was not to be met with. The ſingularity of this circumſtance had often ſtruck Charlotte, as alſo that the old nurſe uſually appeared on thoſe occaſions,

though not an inhabitant of the Caſtle, and aſſigned ſome plauſible pretence for her Lady's abſence, if ſhe chanced to be particularly enquired for.

In the meantime, M. de Clermont and Mr. Haſtings repaired to the different guards placed round the Caſtle, and gave what directions the preſent ſituation of affairs required. The former, by his meſſenger, had received letters, containing ſuch a ſtatement of public and political occurrences, as left his mind perfectly at eaſe from any apprehenſions reſpecting the ſafety of the Caſtle; beſides, his abſence would but be a temporary one, as he meant to return the inſtant it was poſſible to accompliſh it. The departure of himſelf and his family was, however, retarded for ſome hours till the Counteſs became viſible, after which they ſet out for Clermont.

Two days after this period, Mr. Montague received a letter from his mother, the contents of which informed him that ſhe was then very unwell, and anxious to ſee him. The requeſt had been ſo frequently repeated, and in ſo urgent a manner, that, finding himſelf now able to bear the fatigue of travelling, he determined to comply with it. Mr. Haſtings inſiſted on accompanying him home, and promiſed to reviſit the Caſtle in a few days. His young friend came alſo under the ſame engage-

ment,

ment, when his mother's ſtate of health would admit of his leaving her. Madame de Narbonne ſeemed to part from him, nevertheleſs, with reluctance, and preſented him with ſome very fine jewels, as a memorial of her friendſhip and gratitude for the wounds he had received in her defence.

On his ſide, however, much as he admired the Counteſs, the reluctance he experienced to quit the Caſtle was not altogether on her account. During his illneſs and long confinement, Mademoiſelle de Cordet had been his principal nurſe, and cloſe attendant: a congeniality of mind attracted them to each other, and this attachment had proceeded ſome length before either of them ſuſpected the nature of it. Charlotte had diſplayed ſo much care, tenderneſs, and propriety in the attention ſhe paid him, and evinced ſuch fortitude and greatneſs of mind in ſeveral ſituations, where other females would have yielded to their fears, and loſt all ſelf-command, that he conſidered her as ſomething almoſt more than mortal; while the peculiar incidents of his life, his bold and well-conducted exertions in the late attack upon the Caſtle, and the patience and equanimity he evinced under ſome very painful chirurgical operations ſince the commencement of his illneſs, placed him in a no leſs eminent point of view in her opinion.

It is true, St. Julian appeared ſtill a ſuperior character; but the eſteem ſhe felt for him exceeded not the bounds of ſiſterly affection. Mr. Montague inſpired a warmer ſenſation; and though he might not ſeem the firſt figure in the picture when the former was preſent, yet their mode of thinking, their manners, and whole appearance, with a very few exceptions, bore a greater ſimilitude to each other, than any two perſons ſhe had yet met with. Short indeed had been her opportunity to judge of St. Julian's intrinſic merit; with Montague, circumſtances coincided to increaſe her knowledge on that ſubject; and theſe uniformly ſuch as to convince her he was the very character formed by Nature to inſpire a laſting attachment in the boſom of worth and true diſcernment.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

" ——————— At every ſtep,
" Solemn and ſlow, the ſhadows blacker fall,
" And all is awful liſtening gloom around."

.....

" ——————— From this world retir'd,
" Convers'd with angels and immortal forms,
" On gracious errands bent."

THOMSON.

IN a country where public and private diſcords are prevalent, and the bloody hoſtilities of civil war perpetually breaking out in one quarter, while under a temporary ſuppreſſion in another, contradictory reports and uncertain rumours may naturally be expected as a certain conſequence.

Towards

Towards the middle of the ſecond day, after the late viſiters had left the Caſtle, intelligence arrived that the Conventional troops had, in their turn, obtained a victory over the Royaliſts; and that Auſtin Marat was expected to join the former in a few days, with ſuch reinforcements as would enable them to follow up the advantage they had now gained over Charette, from whom a number of priſoners, arms, ammunition, &c. &c. had been recovered.

This account, vague and unauthenticated as it was, had a viſible effect on the Counteſs: ſhe became abſent and buried in thought, and ſeized the firſt opportunity, according to her uſual cuſtom, of retiring to her own apartment.

Under pretence of indiſpoſition, ſhe appeared not again that day; and Charlotte was left to entertain ſome caſual gueſts, who were ſtill in the Caſtle.

The manner in which this commiſſion was given, conveyed a delicate hint that Mademoiſelle de Cordet's own preſence could be diſpenſed with; and Charlotte, juſtly underſtanding it in its true light, acted accordingly.

On the evening of the next day, however, a letter arrived from Clermont, with the contents of which

which it was neceſſary Madame de Narbonne ſhould be made acquainted.

" Madame de Narbonne would be ready to receive it in an hour's time," was the anſwer delivered by the old nurſe.

In little more than the ſpecified period, Charlotte was requeſted to appear with her intelligence.

It contained a confirmation of the preceding day's report, with many additional circumſtances relative to the ſanguinary conduct of Marat; his propoſitions to the Convention on that topic; and the atrocious activity of Auſtin, in the execution of theſe dreadful plans his uncle was ſo eagerly anxious to adopt. What proved no little aggravation to this unpleaſant news, was M. de Clermont's inability to perform his promiſe of returning to the Caſtle on any unexpected emergency: he had been rather indiſpoſed at his departure, and immediately on reaching home, was obliged to retire to his chamber, where he was ſtill confined by a ſevere illneſs. However, it was added, that ſome days at leaſt muſt elapſe before there was much probability of either party having it in their power to moleſt the Caſtle, or its inhabitants; meanwhile, directions on the ſubject accompanied this epiſtle, to thoſe whom he had appointed for its defence; and

though

though Haſtings and his young friend had been under the neceſſity of attending Mrs. Montague to the waters of Bareges, he hoped to procure their return before any real danger was to be apprehended.

M. de Clermont concluded his letter with every poſſible argument that could be urged to calm their minds, and baniſh the terrors of apprehenſion.

Madame de Narbonne finiſhed the epiſtle, and returned it to Charlotte, without making the ſmalleſt comment on its contents, and again ſunk into a profound reverie.

At length raiſing her ſwimming eyes to heaven, ſhe left her ſeat, and ſlowly entered a cloſet on one ſide of the chamber, through the glaſs-door of which Charlotte ſaw her kneel down, and with much ſolemnity of manner addreſs a fervent, but mental, ejaculation to her Creator.

She ſoon afterwards joined Mademoiſelle de Cordet, and ſeveral times appeared upon the point of ſpeaking; but the words died on her lips, and ſhe attempted it in vain.

In a few moments ſhe became more compoſed, and at laſt requeſted Charlotte to accompany her on a walk through the ſhrubbery.

The

The ſun was on the decline, the ſky without a cloud, and the air, even at this ſeaſon of the year, unuſually ſerene.

They croſſed the ſhrubbery in ſilence, and purſued their way down the long and gloomy avenue, where Charlotte firſt rendered herſelf ſerviceable to the Counteſs. The ſcene that had then occurred, again preſented itſelf to her imagination; and as they paſſed the tree where ſhe diſcovered that lady lying almoſt expiring, and covered with blood, ſhe ſhuddered, and her own ran cold in her veins at the recollection of their mutual ſufferings.

There was a ſerious, muſing ſadneſs in the air and manner of Madame de Narbonne; ſhe frequently turned round to remark if they were obſerved, and ſeemed anxiouſly ſolicitous to avoid diſcovery. The ſenſations of the moment were deeply intereſting, and penſively ſtole over the mind: an awful ſtillneſs reigned in every quarter, except where the bird of night, the ſolitary owl, ſkimming over their heads, ſent forth a melancholy ſound, which was faintly reverberated back by a diſtant echo. Tranſient beams from the ſetting luminary were ſeen through viſtas in the foreſt, trembling on the weſtern waves, or partially darting acroſs the tall trees, and varying their length-

ened

ened ſhadows into a thouſand fantaſtic forms. The whole ſcene ſeemed calculated for meditation, and intenſely was it indulged by thoſe who now felt its influence.

At the end of the avenue, they entered a dark and almoſt impervious wilderneſs: the cherry, the fig, the acacia, the poplar, and horſe-cheſnut were cloſely interwoven with woodbine and ivy; but the Counteſs, acquainted with every winding path, knew where to turn, and they walked on without being incommoded by the entangled boughs through which they had to paſs. As they proceeded along, the ſolemn ſtillneſs, which had already made a forcible impreſſion on Charlotte's mind, gradually increaſed, and her heart beat quicker than uſual; ſhe followed, however, the ſteps of her leader, and attempted not to interrupt the awful calm that prevailed on all ſides.

Hitherto not a ſingle word had been uttered by either.

At length Madame de Narbonne, once more cautiouſly obſerving if they remained unnoticed, heaved a mournful ſigh, and in a low, but ſolemn voice, broke the melancholy ſilence.

She diſcourſed on the immortality of the ſoul; the rewards prepared for innocence and virtue in happier regions, where retributive juſtice would be

be diſpenſed with unerring wiſdom, and the tear of anguiſh no longer wrung from the eye of the oppreſſed by the heavy hand of the oppreſſor; where peace would be reſtored to thoſe whoſe hearts have been bent to the earth by unmerited affliction; and where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage!—She dwelt on the comforts of a mind unconſcious of reproach at its final departure, and the celeſtial tranſports experienced on a future reunion with thoſe formerly moſt dear to us in this world. The joys of eternity, ſhe ſaid, had often been her's by anticipation; but the imaginary ſcene would probably now be ſoon realized.—Then, preſſing her hand on her heart, ſhe caſt a look upwards, an emphatical look, almoſt amounting to reproach tempered by reſignation; and added, in a ſtill lower accent—

"For there the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary are at reſt!"

The whole tenor of her converſation ſhewed a ſoul prepared for whatever might befal her; and, to all appearance, firmed againſt the remaining viciſſitudes of life.

Charlotte liſtened with enthuſiaſtic attention, and wept in ſilence; no tear, however, fell from the eyes of Madame de Narbonne;—misfortune ſeemed to have drained the ſource of ſorrow, or

the

the ſublimity of the ſubject to have raiſed her mind

" ———————— Above
" The reach of human pain, above the flight
" Of human joy *."

Her features, at the moment, diſplayed an emanation of the divinity within; while every look, animated by the topic, beamed with more than mortal expreſſion—mild, heavenly, and placid!—they beſpoke her thoughts fixed on a better world, and hope ſucceeding to all the miſeries of deſpair!

A moon-beam that pierced through the almoſt impervious gloom of the foliage, ſhed a ſoft radiance over her whole figure, and rendered her intereſting in the extreme.

The mind of Mademoiſelle de Cordet had, for ſome time, been wound up to a painful degree of expectation, and it now reached its climax.—She could have perſuaded herſelf that a finiſhed model for the form and face of a Madona ſtood before her; and a more forcible ſenſation of reſpect, mingled with increaſed affection, took poſſeſſion of her heart.

* Thomſon.

At

At the inſtant of this awful pauſe, her contemplation was interrupted: a dark cloud obſcured the moon, and juſt as they were again waiting for her re-appearance, a groan, deep, hollow, and prolonged, ſtruck their ears!

Charlotte ſtarted with horror!—the laſt words of the Counteſs dwelt upon her memory, and ſhe trembled leſt they were upon the point of being literally verified.

Madame de Narbonne ſpoke not, but ſighed repeatedly; and Charlotte's apprehenſions acquired additional force every moment.

The moon, once more emerging from her duſky veil, again darted a partial ray through the ſurrounding gloom, and the eyes of the Counteſs were immediately employed in ſome intereſting ſcrutiny. —"Poor, poor fellow! where art thou?" was uttered in a mournful accent, as ſhe directed her view on every ſide.

"Good Heavens! my dear Madam, of whom do you ſpeak?" cried Charlotte, almoſt breathleſs with terror and ſurpriſe.

Madame de Narbonne now, for the firſt time, turned round to regard her young companion; and ſhe ſaw her almoſt ſinking under the accumulation of ideas that oppreſſed her.

A half-formed ſmile, benignant and heavenly, illumed her countenance; but it was like the dying taper's unequal light, tranſient and penſive; ſhe opened her lips to ſpeak, but was again interrupted by a ſecond groan, ſtill heavier than the firſt.

Charlotte caught hold of her arm, as ſhe was turning to the quarter from whence it proceeded.—"Tell me, I conjure you, what is the cauſe of that dreadful groan!" ſhe exclaimed. "You, Madam, certainly are acquainted with the ſource of it; for your looks betray no alarm."

"And is it poſſible," ſaid the Counteſs, again obſerving her with a faint and melancholy ſmile, "is it really poſſible you, my dear Charlotte, ſhould feel any on the preſent occaſion?—You, whom I have known encounter dangers that many men, with all their boaſted courage, would have ſhrunk from!—Truſt me, if the wretched inhabitants of this miſerable world are fortunate enough to eſcape the machinations of their unprincipled fellow-mortals, they have little to fear from the attempts of ſupernatural beings, were ſuch even permitted to moleſt them."

Another groan!

"Oh my poor old friend," cried the Counteſs, "I fear you are ill indeed!"

She

She ruſhed into a cloſer part of the wilderneſs; and Charlotte (forgetting, as uſual, every ſelfiſh conſideration in her anxiety for Madame de Narbonne's ſafety) followed her ſteps with trepidation and aſtoniſhment.

Their ſearch, however, was for ſome time in vain. At length, leaning on the back of a garden-chair (many of which were ſcattered through the woods of Narbonne for reſting places), Charlotte perceived an old and venerable figure, whom the Counteſs inſtantly accoſted with an air of tenderneſs and ſolicitude, and expreſſed an apprehenſion that his wound was more than uſually painful.

"No, Madame," replied the old man, "but fearing I was too late, I haſtened to meet you, and, in my hurry, fell againſt the trunk of a tree, which ſtunned me a little; but I am now better again, and ready to attend you."

"No, my good friend," ſaid Madame de Narbonne, "you ſhall not attend me at preſent, for I ſee you are more hurt than you are willing to confeſs; beſides I have company with me, and therefore you are not wanted. Return then to the cottage, and we will aſſiſt you."

To this offer the old man, however, would not conſent; but, feeble and lame as he was, walked ſlowly away by himſelf.

Charlotte inſiſted on following him; but this he would not permit, more than the former.

"My cottage, Mademoiſelle, is juſt at the end of that path. I am accuſtomed," ſaid he, "to ſtroll through this part of the foreſt at all times of the night, and know every corner of it."

The ladies ſaw he was really able to proceed alone, and therefore continued their own route.—For ſome time they were both ſilent, Charlotte in expectation of hearing the Counteſs ſpeak, and the latter again abſorbed in reflection.

Awaking from her reverie, ſhe at laſt ſtopped, and turning to Charlotte—

"He was my poor brother's ſervant," ſaid ſhe, "and his firſt male attendant in childhood; he followed him into the army, and, ere his maſter expired, received a dangerous wound in his defence, the effects of which ſtill remain, in ſpite of every attempt to remove them, and at times he ſuffers much pain; but his ſituation is otherwiſe comfortable and eaſy, as it ought to be. Before I thought of requeſting your company, I had appointed him to be in waiting in this quarter of the foreſt, where he generally attends in the evenings to conduct me to the door of the receſs;—his principal buſineſs is to take care of an old favourite horſe once belonging to—but no matter."—The

Counteſs ſighed deeply, and again walked on in ſilence.

Winding through another intricate and half-concealed path, they at laſt reached the ruinous remains of an ancient building;—they entered it; and while the Counteſs cautiouſly regarded every object around them, they paſſed through ſeveral gloomy vaults, whoſe arched roofs were dripping with damps, and where the hollow ſound of their own footſteps was ſufficiently powerful to have appalled common minds. Madame de Narbonne, however, led the way, and ſhe was well acquainted with its various turnings. As they emerged into the air, a noiſe, like a diſtant waterfall, was heard; and at intervals Charlotte fancied ſhe once more recognized the ſoft ſtrains of muſic ſhe formerly met with at the rock of Narbonne. She looked around to diſcover if they were in the vicinity of it; but the moon was again overcaſt, and the underwood of the foreſt was too high to admit of any obſervation while thus obſcured in darkneſs.

"I had no idea, my dear Madam," ſaid Charlotte, "that the receſs was ſo diſtant."

"No," replied the Counteſs, "neither is it ſo diſtant as it muſt have appeared from the road we have taken; there are ſeveral nearer paths leading to it;—but I expected to have met a friend from

the neighbouring Convent, who, nevertheleſs—" Here ſhe pauſed, and left the ſentence unfiniſhed; again reſuming the diſcourſe, ſhe added, " It is only when I am particularly anxious to avoid every chance of obſervation, that this winding path is preferred; but our walk is nearly at an end."

Madame de Narbonne now opened a ſmall ruſtic gate, at the end of a gloomy avenue, and a few minutes more brought them to the door of the receſs.

The Counteſs cautiouſly unlocked it, and her companion found herſelf in a ſaloon that ſeemed to have been the work of ſuperior beings.

Adorned in all the elegant ſimplicity of uncorrupted taſte, every thing appeared ſuitable to its romantic and rural ſituation. Charlotte had already heard much of this ſpot; but the approach was ſo different from what ſhe had hitherto conceived, that unleſs Madame de Narbonne had accounted for that circumſtance, ſhe would have been at a loſs what to have thought on the ſubject.—From one of the windows, ſomething white was faintly ſeen at a little diſtance, with which the dark ſhades of the ſurrounding foreſt formed a ſtriking contraſt, as the ſilver hue of a moon-beam reſted upon its ſummit; but diſtinction of objects on that ſide was now impoſſible, and therefore

Charlotte

Charlotte did not attempt it. The daſhing ſound of the cataract was more plainly heard than before; its foaming torrent, ruſhing over immenſe precipices, diſplayed a proſpect of awful grandeur, as the ſnowy ſheet, white with foam, glittered at intervals through the chaſms of intercepting rocks; or, in other places, burſt forth with rapidity over perpendicular deſcents, and ſhowered its ſpray, like ſparkling dew-drops, around it. The ſituation from whence it was now ſeen, proved peculiarly favourable for a moonlight view, and Charlotte enjoyed it with all the enthuſiaſm natural to her temper.

Turning to expreſs her feelings on the occaſion, ſhe remarked an uncommon degree of anxiety and thoughtfulneſs on the features of the Counteſs.

"You are not well, my dear Madam," cried ſhe haſtily.

"Be ſeated, Charlotte," ſaid Madame de Narbonne, in a ſolemn voice, without returning any direct anſwer to her queſtion, "I have ſomething to mention of importance. Your prudence cannot be ſuſpected, otherwiſe what follows had never been entruſted to it. The goodneſs of your heart, that firmneſs of mind ſo conſpicuous in your character, with a thouſand other ſuperior qualities, have at laſt removed the unfavourable prepoſſeſſion once

entertained againſt you, on account of a ſuppoſed contrariety in political ſentiments; time has ſhewn your opinions on theſe ſubjects are agreeable to reaſon, and ultimately conſonant to my own.—The confidence I am now upon the point of repoſing in you, marks my dependance on your principles, beyond any other poſſible proof in my power to have given. But, after premiſing thus much, be not ſurpriſed if I put your patience to a further trial, by requiring an engagement of the moſt binding nature, never to diſcloſe the ſubject of the preſent conference, unleſs in a caſe of the utmoſt emergency. Such a one was exacted from myſelf on a ſimilar occaſion, and on no other condition dare I proceed at preſent.—Swear then to be faithful to the ſecret repoſed in you!—Swear to obſerve the injunctions that accompany it!—Swear, as you hope for happineſs here, or hereafter, to perform, as far as is poſſible, what is ſoon to be requeſted of you, and never let me have cauſe to repent of this evening's tranſaction!"

"I do ſwear," replied Charlotte, with energy; "ſo help me, Heaven, as I fulfil your expectations!—Never, no never ſhall you have reaſon to regret your dependance on me!—Life ſhall ſooner be torn from this boſom, than preſerved at the expence of my honour—the one lies at the mercy of the

the bloody aſſaſſin, the other is in my own power. Human means are inadequate to make me violate a promiſe, and equally ſo to deceive you!"

"Enough!" ſaid the Counteſs; "I think I know you too well to ſuppoſe any further aſſurance neceſſary; but the times are critical, and require every earthly precaution.—As for myſelf, whatever incident takes place, is now of little conſequence; this world was not made for me—and I truſt I have nearly done with it.—Joy, hope, or anxiety no longer, on my own account, cauſe a moment's agitation:—the future can ſcarcely approach in darker colours than the paſt—if it ſhould, I am armed for the worſt, and fear not to meet it!"

The firm, but mournful and pathetic, tone in which Madame de Narbonne uttered theſe words, attended by a ſolemn momentary pauſe, while her eyes were ſteadily fixed on the heavens, vibrated on Charlotte's heart with a ſenſation more deep than reſpect, more powerful than compaſſion!—it almoſt amounted to ſomething like a feeling of horror, and ſhe gazed upon her face in ſilent expectation of what was to follow.

At this inſtant of painful ſuſpenſe, a bell was heard ſlowly tolling—every ſtroke ſeemed the death knell of ſome departing ſpirit, whoſe light and

now unencumbered eſſence it was wafting to a happier region.

"Hark!" cried Mademoiſelle de Cordet, "from whence proceeds that ſound?—It is not from the Caſtle, certainly."

"No," returned the Counteſs, "it comes from yonder Convent on the hill; you ſee its white turrets above the thick foliage around it."

The moon had now roſe conſiderably higher, and the building was of courſe become more diſtinguiſhable. Charlotte looked, and ſoon recognized the venerable towers of the Monaſtery, which ſhe did not imagine could have been viewed from her preſent ſituation; and ſhe found it was the ſame object that caught her attention on their firſt entrance.

"It is the evening bell for veſpers," continued the Counteſs. "Peaceful inhabitants of thoſe ſacred walls! ſtill may you enjoy your preſent undiſturbed tranquillity; though I fear, much do I fear that indulgence will not be long permitted you!—Something tells me, however, that I ſhall be exempted from ſeeing the fatal period of diſſolution!—ſomething tells me, the vital ſpark of my own exiſtence is faſt undermining, and the calm retreat of the grave ready to ſhelter this weary frame from every chance of future miſery;—while,

alas!

alas! diſperſed, houſeleſs, and friendleſs, in an unfeeling world, you may poſſibly be ſubjected to a thouſand evils in the decline of life, which the happier ſcenes of early years have but ill-prepared you to encounter."

She ſtopped, and once more ſeemed abſorbed in mental reflection. At length heaving a deep ſigh, and turning her now humid eyes on Charlotte, Madame de Narbonne thus reſumed her diſcourſe—

"What I have heard from public report and private opinion, joined with the intelligence contained in your letter from Clermont, but too well coincides with my own ſentiments on national affairs. I have long, in ſilence, marked their tendency, and obſervation convinces me ſome dreadful criſis is again at hand. The two Marats, I am informed, are ſecretly uſing their influence for that purpoſe; and never, alas! do the ſanguinary monſters who bear that name become active, without tracing their courſe in rivers of human blood!—If Auſtin ſucceeds in thoſe private deſigns he has formerly attempted, my lot, I know, is decided!—This fatal certainty, therefore, convinces me there is no time to loſe, where the ſafety of others is materially concerned. The hope of your being able to afford them that aſſiſtance, which the clay-cold

ſtroke of death may have rendered me incapable of tendering, with a variety of other preſſing circumſtances duly weighed, have at laſt fixed my reſolutions on the preſent topic, and finally determined me to entruſt you with this important and now neceſſary diſcovery; as one, in my eyes, every way worthy of your confidence. The fate of many, perhaps, hangs upon it, and the ſafety of numbers may be ſecured through its means.—Oh that the Omnipotent Being, who ſees the motives of our moſt hidden actions, the ſecret ſprings of our conduct, may ſo direct your's as to anſwer my expectations, and prove eſſentially conducive to the good of your fellow-creatures!—I again adjure you, as you yourſelf look for protection from the Great Ruler of heaven and earth, to obſerve my injunctions, and uſe your utmoſt exertions in the execution of them!—Attend then to what I ſay, and treaſure my communications in the deepeſt receſſes of your heart.

"Since recent and well-founded obſervation muſt convince us that thoſe deſtructive national calamities, which have ſo long preyed upon the vitals of this devoted kingdom, are daily more and more extending their fatal influence to our quarter of the country; one truth at leaſt, from experience, is ſelf-evident—that in retreat or conceal-

ment,

ment, lies the ſole ſafety of our ill-fated Nobility, and to ſome of them it is in my power to procure a proper place for the latter. One of high rank already enjoys the benefit of it, not far from this ſpot.—Reſtrain your ſurpriſe—all ſhall be revealed in time, for all muſt hereafter depend upon your generoſity and management, when I am beyond the reach of mortal aſſiſtance!"

Exhauſted by the incidents of the evening, Madame de Narbonne now complained of fatigue, and weakneſs of ſpirits; the laſt had been already exerted above their uſual tone, and ſhe found it impoſſible to proceed at preſent; ſhe therefore propoſed to reſt a little on the couch where they were ſeated, and endeavoured to compoſe her mind in the interim for what was to follow.

About a quarter of an hour elapſed in this manner, during which period neither of them ſpoke a ſyllable.

Charlotte then roſe, and ſtood at the window in a muſing poſture, with her eyes rivetted on the floor, without being ſenſible that ſhe was looking at it. Madame de Narbonne continued to lean againſt the back of the ſofa, but ſhe ſeemed, by her breathing, to be too much agitated for benefiting by the repoſe ſhe had hoped to obtain. The clock from the Convent ſteeple ſlowly reſounded the departure

of another hour.—" Ah!" cried the Counteſs, raiſing her head, " the evening waſtes—it is time to purſue my original intentions."—She aroſe, went to the door of the ſaloon, and carefully ſecuring it from the chance of interruption, reſumed her diſcourſe again.

" You will ſoon," ſaid ſhe, " I once more repeat, be convinced how great is the value of the ſecret now to be repoſed in you, by the high importance annexed to it.—Obſerve my ſteps, and follow where they lead."

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

" O'er the twilight groves and duſky caves,
" Long-ſounding aiſles, and intermingled graves,
" Black Melancholy ſits, and round her throws
" A deathlike ſilence, and a dread repoſe.

.....

" Awful arches make a noon-day night,
" And the dim windows ſhed a ſolemn light."

POPE.

AS ſhe thus ſpoke, Madame de Narbonne approached an old marble ſtatue of no very remarkable workmanſhip, and which ſeemed inferior, in every reſpect, to ſeveral others in the room: it was placed in a ſort of dark receſs, and appeared half ſunk in the wall. Hitherto it had eſcaped Charlotte's notice, and now, when it was perceived, ſhe could

could diſcover no peculiar beauty in the execution or deſign, ſufficiently conſpicuous to merit its preſent ſtation. It ſeemed, indeed, to be merely conſidered as a piece of lumber; for it was nearly concealed by a number of green-houſe plants that ſpread around it, ſome of which, in ſmaller pots, were ſet upon its pedeſtal, and looked as if they vied with each other in twining their fragrant and variegated foliage fantaſtically over its ancient form.

The ſaloon was hung with pictures by the firſt maſters;—an organ, a harpſichord, a bookcaſe, a cabinet of curioſities, a few capital ſtatues, and ſeveral other valuable articles; beſides a much finer collection of flowering ſhrubs in another part of the room—all attracted her attention from the above figure, which, it is probable, if unaccompanied by the Counteſs, would have paſſed totally unnoticed by Mademoiſelle de Cordet.

What then was Charlotte's aſtoniſhment when, at the Counteſs's deſire, having aſſiſted her to puſh back ſome of the verdant boughs that more immediately ſheltered the old ſtatue from view, ſhe ſaw Madame de Narbonne preſs her foot againſt a particular part of its pedeſtal, and applying her hand to the oppoſite ſide, beheld the ſculptured figure ſlowly move from its former poſition, and diſcover a

ſmall

ſmall aperture, barely large enough for the entrance of a ſingle perſon at a time!

Madame de Narbonne ſtopped for a moment to draw down the branches as they formerly hung. Charlotte again lent her aid in ſilence, and in the courſe of her employment remarked, that what ſhe had taken entirely for marble, was only a thin coat of it, joined together in ſuch a manner as to have the ſemblance of ſolidity, with the ſecret advantage of being eaſily moved, from its comparative lightneſs to ſo heavy a body.—The Counteſs then led the way, and deſcended a few ſteps: an iron-door, cruſted over by time, preſented itſelf; ſhe touched a hidden ſpring, inviſible almoſt to the niceſt eye; its ponderous form gradually receded, and, in proportion as this was the caſe, the ſtatue returned to its original ſtation.

So wonderful a piece of machinery had been the work of much labour and great ingenuity; it was perfectly calculated to baffle the utmoſt efforts of curioſity, and had, no doubt, from the length of its duration, often been put to the teſt in that way.

"Give me your hand," ſaid Madame de Narbonne, as this barrier hoarſely cloſed on its jarring hinges behind them; "give me your hand, and fear nothing."

" I know not to fear," replied her companion, " while unconſcious of mental reproach.—Lead on, Madam, and think not of me."

The Counteſs preſſed her hand in token of approbation, and proceeded to conduct her through the awful darkneſs that now enveloped them.

Another impediment, of ſimilar conſtruction with the laſt, interrupted their progreſs; it alſo was opened and cloſed again much in the ſame manner. Madame de Narbonne ſtopped at the entrance to ſtrike a light; no ſooner was this accompliſhed, than ten thouſand beautiful and fantaſtic objects burſt upon the aſtoniſhed optics of Mademoiſelle de Cordet: emeralds, diamonds, rubies, every ſparkling gem ſeemed collected in this fairy abode.

Accuſtomed to ſee it ſo frequently, and her thoughts at the time, probably, otherwiſe occupied, the Counteſs was not at firſt aware of Charlotte's ſurpriſe, which ſoon became too powerful to be ſuppreſſed, and ſhe eagerly requeſted an explanation of ſo wonderful a ſcene.

" It is but an illuſion of the ſenſes," replied Madame de Narbonne, in anſwer to her enquiries; " theſe ſparkling incruſtations are merely the effect of petrifactions, produced and nouriſhed from the damps that you ſee collected on the roof and ſides

ſides of this ſubterraneous apartment.—Let us proceed—all ſhall be explained in time."

Charlotte bowed, caſt her eyes forward, and once more followed her conductor.

They now aſcended ſome ſteps; ſeveral ſmall apartments, through which they paſſed, appeared habitable; plain, but neat furniture, were in ſome of them, and lamps hung ſuſpended, or fixed againſt the walls, with requiſite materials for immediate uſe. At length they reached a more elegant and better proportioned chamber: it had a beautiful window of Gothic conſtruction, the ceiling was high and arched, and the walls were compoſed of a delicate white marble, lightly veined with lines of a blueiſh colour. The artiſt's chiſel was viſible in the different compartments, where a great variety of well-executed ornaments were finiſhed with much taſte. The pillars on each ſide of the window were of incomparable workmanſhip; the latter formed a ſort of receſs, where four or five people might ſit at their eaſe, and enjoy the proſpect before them; what that proſpect conſiſted of Charlotte could not at preſent determine, for the caſement was ſhaded with innumerable branches of ſhrubs, or trees, that hung over it on the outſide, almoſt too cloſely to admit of inveſtigation by moonlight; but

but the height of it was the principal impediment to her curioſity.

On each ſide, however, a few ſmall marble ſteps remedied the laſt difficulty. The Counteſs deſired her young friend to aſcend.

"What an enchanting ſcene!" exclaimed Charlotte, with enthuſiaſm.

The foliage that concealed the window below, was here trained in ſuch a manner as to allow a bird's-eye view of the vicinity. the moon at this inſtant ſhone forth in cloudleſs majeſty, while a ſoft ſoothing murmur was heard at intervals, like the gliding of half-ruffled waves, as they gently rolled againſt their accuſtomed limits.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet's eyes had hitherto been attracted by the ſilver planet above her; ſhe now turned them downwards, and perceived its beams glittering on the reflective ſurface of an immenſe ſpace of water, that ſlowly daſhed below, and ſeemed to acknowledge the walls of the place as its final boundary.

A nightingale, tempted by the fineneſs of the evening, began his nocturnal hymn earlier than uſual, from one of the ſhading boughs that hung over the window, and was anſwered at every pauſe by another at a greater diſtance; their notes were melodious,

melodious, penſive, and perfectly ſuitable to the hour and ſcene around them.

While Charlotte ſtood wrapped in the charms of pleaſing contemplation, Madame de Narbonne placed her lamp in ſuch a manner as not to interfere with the more agreeable light from the window; and complaining again of laſſitude, threw herſelf upon a ſeat under a gilded canopy, whoſe appearance beſpoke the faſhion of former days, and conveyed ideas of grandeur, joined at the ſame time with an airy elegance that would have merited admiration in any age whatever.

"I meant," ſaid the Counteſs, "to have ſhewn you ſome other apartments before the commencement of their hiſtory and my own; but the agitation of my mind and ſpirits, together with the exertions I have already made, overcome me—I feel fatigued and unable to conduct you farther at preſent; what remains to be explored, muſt therefore be reſerved for another opportunity.—What remains," repeated ſhe, raiſing her humid eyes with a melancholy earneſtneſs, "Ah!—yes!—that ſubject well merits an evening ſet apart for it.—Communications of the moſt affecting nature are too cloſely interwoven with the narrative, to be entered upon till ſuch time as I feel myſelf more equal to the taſk;—for, alas! nearly nineteen years

of

of miſery have not yet ſoftened the horrors of remembrance, nor rendered me callous to the heavy hand of misfortune. — — — — — —

— — — — — — — — — — —

Come then, my dear Charlotte, place yourſelf by me, while I explain what we have already ſeen."

"My curioſity," replied Charlotte, as ſhe deſcended from the window, "has been ſo long on the rack, that I ſhall moſt willingly obey you;—every thing I ſee or hear, amazes me!—If more is ſtill to be explored, what an immenſe ſpace for accommodation muſt this place contain!—it has ſurely been the work of ages!"

"It has ſo," returned the Counteſs; "but here too, like the chamber of petrifactions, there is a deception:—while the ſtranger, ignorant of its conſtruction, imagines himſelf travelling onward for a prodigious length of way, he is in fact much nearer his firſt entrance than appearances render him aware of. Inſtead of going in a ſtraight line, our path has inſenſibly been circular; moſt part of the rooms lay towards the middle, and only one or two, like the preſent, which is denominated the ſummer reſidence, is accommodated with a window of this conſtruction or ſize.

"Though much more important and intereſting events are to be related, yet it is firſt neceſſary

to

to begin with the local hiſtory of the place, the particulars of which it is now proper you ſhould be minutely acquainted with. And here let me obſerve, that you muſt, no doubt, ſecretly wonder, ſince my intelligence appears of ſo much conſequence, that I had not rather conſided it to ſome of the neighbouring families, whoſe power and influence might better enable them to execute the various circumſtances connected with it; but I have long lived in ſo retired a manner, as to have no other intercourſe with thoſe in the vicinity, except what ceremony or common politeneſs required on any accidental encounter. The real private opinions entertained by moſt of them, are totally unknown to me; and the times are ſo critical that, I fear, by an ill-placed confidence, to loſe the advantages now in my power. As for the generality of thoſe who of late viſit at the Caſtle, your own obſervation muſt convince you, that any dependance on them is out of the queſtion, and would be the height of madneſs. It is true, ſome worthy characters mix in the number, amongſt whom M. de Clermont claims a diſtinguiſhed rank; but my intimacy with him is not of longer ſtanding than with yourſelf, nor have we been nearly ſo often together, of courſe our mutual views and ſentiments are more unknown to each other. Beſides,

independent

independent of this circumſtance, he has many who look up to him for ſafety and protection, either of which might be out of his power to offer, were he ſuſpected of any myſterious connection with one like me, ſo unfortunately ſituated with both ſides of the queſtion. It would, therefore, be cruel to involve him and his family in the too probable conſequences of ſuch a truſt; particularly as I have reaſon to ſuppoſe that every perſon poſſeſſed of wealth or reſpectability in the neighbourhood, are already become objects of ſuſpicion and private obſervation to thoſe of either party, who, from their avidity for plunder, and every kind of devaſtation, are conſtantly on the watch to ſeize any plauſible excuſe for the enormity of their own proceedings. —Alas! how unhappily am I ſituated!—The ties ſuppoſed to bind me to the Convention, have brought me into diſcredit with my equals in the country, and the Nobility think I have forfeited, by my marriage, all future title to rank with them; while their opponents, who have now more acceſs to remark my conduct, are no leſs doubtful of its ſincerity, and put a thouſand imaginary conſtructions on my moſt innocent actions. Thus, without any fault of my own, am I reprobated by Royaliſts and Republicans, and truſted by neither. You, of all the number, judging from the innate

nobleneſs

nobleneſs of your own ſentiments, have ſuppoſed me not unworthy of perſevering attention; and, in ſpite of the moſt deep-rooted repugnance to forming an intimacy with any one, and a want of confidence in all, have at length conquered this long-indulged reſerve, which time and misfortune had almoſt conſtituted a ſecond nature.

"Others, perhaps, in your predicament, might think I made them pay high for ſuch a mark of approbation, if their ſafety was thereby endangered; but I know you are ſuperior to ſelfiſh conſiderations, and that you poſſeſs a ſoul equal to any great call that the emergency of the times may require: beſides, leſs ſuſpicion will attach to you as a ſingle, and nearly unconnected female, than to a man of M. de Clermont's importance in the province. I could ſtill adduce many other cauſes for this preference in your favour; but convinced of its propriety in my own mind, I ſhall forbear to enumerate them further at preſent. Indeed any other aſſiſtant is not, at this juncture, abſolutely neceſſary for the occaſion, and our future views muſt be pretty much ruled by contingencies. At the worſt, it is but admitting M. de Clermont, or others judged worthy of the diſtinction, into the ſecret, when the aſpect of affairs renders a ſtep of that kind proper to be taken. After premiſing thus much,

much, I ſhall now proceed with my narrative, and give you the promiſed deſcription of this habitation.

" The long winding paſſages and range of apartments it contains, are all, or nearly all, formed in a ſolid rock of prodigious extent. A hermit, ſome centuries ago, dwelt in a ſmall cave, which had probably once been a receptacle for wild beaſts.—At a period like the preſent, when civil commotion tore the kingdom to pieces, a Prince of the Blood, flying from the fury of rebellion, accidentally diſcovered the old man's retreat, and took ſhelter with him. Some of the Royal party wandering about in queſt of their maſter, at length, alſo by chance, or poſſibly through the means of information, gained a knowledge of the place of his concealment, and ſoon contrived to join him in it.

" As neceſſity required a continuance there for a certain ſeaſon, from a wiſh to render their Prince's ſituation more convenient, and their own ſomewhat comfortable, they ſet to work; and being all perſons of tried fidelity, and much attached to their unfortunate Commander, in proceſs of time another chamber or two were produced.

" The Royal recluſe, after a variety of ſufferings and difficulties, at length aſcended the throne of his anceſtors; but, though exalted to ſo high a ſtation,

ſtation, he forgot not the friendly ſpot that had proved a ſhelter in the hour of adverſity. He cauſed the interior to be conſiderably enlarged, and the excavations ſo contrived as to afford commodious and ſafe lodging for thoſe who might afterwards find themſelves reduced to ſeek its protection.

" Nevertheleſs, that the advantages expected to be derived from ſuch an aſylum, might not hereafter be defeated by too public a knowledge of its internal improvements, thoſe perſons who had formerly reſided there with the Prince, were entruſted with the ſole management, after taking a ſolemn oath, and adminiſtering the ſame to all employed under them, on the forfeiture of their lives and fortunes, to be faithful in the ſtrict obſervance of ſecrecy. The emoluments heaped upon them, with the certain and dreadful puniſhment incurred by a breach of confidence, were, no doubt, powerful motives for ſecuring their ſilence on the ſubject.— The great age of the Hermit, who lived to be upwards of an hundred, his ſanctity, and the acts of devotion he was ſaid to perform, all conſpired to the general view, by procuring the place ſuch a character for holineſs, as infuſed a degree of religious reſpect in his caſual viſiters, highly favourable to the ſyſtem of concealment, by the reſtraint

it impoſed on impertinent curioſity, which might otherwiſe have led to troubleſome and diſagreeable inveſtigations.

" In the following reign it was annexed to the Crown, under the oſtenſible idea of a ſpot, the romantic ſituation of which had particularly pleaſed the Monarch, as well calculated for the culture of a peculiar ſort of fruit he was fond of, and which indeed grows here, to this day, in great luxuriance.

" The Hermit's abode was enlarged, and is now, in fact, part of the ſaloon we firſt entered; two rooms were added to it, and a chapel hollowed out in a projection of the rock towards the left; around the whole, evergreens, of all ſorts and deſcriptions, were thickly intermixed with other plantations, with a view to render his habitation as little obtruſively conſpicuous as poſſible.

" In your pedeſtrian excurſions, you muſt often have been ſtruck with the grand and beautiful ſituation of the Rock of Narbonne, though then ignorant of its principal and moſt uſeful advantages.

" Many are the Princely and noble fugitives ſaid to have taken refuge here at different periods, and on various occaſions.

" Succeeding

" Succeeding Sovereigns frequently proved the benefit reſulting from its poſſeſſion, and ſeveral added either to its beauty or convenience, as beſt ſuited their abilities at the time.

" In the chamber where we are now ſeated, with two others rather ſmaller on that ſide, one Monarch is reported to have concealed a favourite miſtreſs of high rank from the revengeful fury of his jealous Queen; and I am inclined to believe there is ſome truth in the ſtory, from traditional accounts I have met with.—Indeed the whole execution of this apartment beſpeaks it to have been the reſidence of wealth, luxury, and taſte; and has every appearance of being calculated rather to pleaſe and enchant the ſenſes, than for the purpoſes of common convenience, or even the genteeler accommodation of the great. Royal magnificence is ſtill conſpicuous in many parts of it.—Take the lamp," continued the Counteſs, " examine the different compartments, and you will ſoon be perſuaded I do not exaggerate."

Charlotte was perfectly convinced before ſhe had gone half round it, that Madame de Narbonne's aſſertion was well-founded:—*fleurs de lis*; ſubjects taken in abundance from the Heathen Mythology; ſmall, but elegantly formed ſtatues; repreſentations of ſtriking occurrences in hiſtory; and, from a combina-

tion of ideas, not uncommon in the earlier days of ſuperſtition, many figures were here portrayed from the ſacred volume of religion, aſſembled to celebrate acts of ſolemn devotion, in one compartment; while in another, a group of Satyrs, or Bacchanalians, were no leſs zealous in the performance of their unhallowed, and ſometimes even indecent orgies. Numberleſs were the ornaments that adorned this formerly gay, and ſtill ſuperb abode; thoſe chiſelled in the ſolid marble that compoſed its walls, had hitherto defied the gnawing tooth of revolving Time, whoſe ravages on the once rich and coſtly furniture were now viſible in various degrees of depredation;—enough, however, yet remained in a tolerable ſtate of preſervation, to impreſs the beholder with what it muſt have been in its meridian ſplendour.

As Charlotte finiſhed her tranſient ſurvey, Madame de Narbonne thus reſumed her diſcourſe—

"I ſhould have told you," continued ſhe, "that about the time this place became the reſidence of the Royal favourite, an hereditary office was inſtituted, under the oſtenſible denomination of "Keeper of the King's Gardens at the Rock of Narbonne;" but in fact intended as a protection and ſecurity againſt the reſentment and reſearches of a vindictive Queen.

"This

« This poſt, you may believe, was only entruſted to a perſon of approved fidelity, who was obliged to take the accuſtomed oath of ſecrecy in the ſame manner, and under the ſame forfeitures as already mentioned; and it was but on his next ſucceſſor's arrival at a ſpecified age, his own probable diſſolution, or the apprehended approach of certain danger, that the important ſecret, accompanied with the uſual ceremonial on its diſcloſure, was to be communicated.

« At a ſhort diſtance from the rock are the remains of an ancient manſion, through the vaulted paſſage of which we purſued our route hither. It formerly belonged to a Keeper, who, negligent or treacherous to the engagement he had taken, was upon the point of delivering his charge to the enemies of his King and country, when a timely diſcovery of the intention defeated its execution, and conſigned himſelf to what was judged a merited, but horrible puniſhment.

« This inſtance of ſeverity, accompanied with every dreadful circumſtance that could render it truly terrible, and make a laſting impreſſion on the memory, was long remembered, both here and in the neighbouring provinces, and ſecured it, for a great length of time, from deſigns of a ſimilar nature.

" Not many years before the memorable period of the Engliſh Henry the Fifth's victories in France, a monaſtery was founded in the vicinity, which, from the auſtere manners of its inhabitants, and the acts of devotion they annually walked in proceſſion to perform at the Rock of Narbonne, ſtill farther increaſed, in the minds of the vulgar, that veneration, ariſing from notions of ſanctity attached to this place; being the former reſidence of a holy Hermit, who was ſaid to have exhibited innumerable and wonderful miracles in his day.

" Nothing could be better calculated for the purpoſe of concealment than the indulgence of ſuch ideas, which certainly proved a formidable barrier in thoſe dark ages, when blind ſuperſtition held the reaſoning faculties of the mind in ſubjection.

" It ſo happened that the then hereditary Keeper, diſguſted with ſome recent diſappointment he had met with in the world, formed the ſcheme of erecting the ſeminary I ſpeak of, and when completed, became Superior of it. He was a principal favourite with the reigning King, Charles VI. and knowing the value ſet on this ſpot by that Monarch, from whom he wiſhed to obtain ſome conſiderable, but diſputed privileges for the monaſtic Order he had founded, no labour nor expence were

were ſpared to make the rock and its environs more agreeable in the eyes of his Royal Maſter.

" This proved a fortunate circumſtance for his ſon, the Dauphin, afterwards Charles VII. who having ſolicited the Duke of Burgundy to join his forces with his, had ventured to attack the Engliſh, though inferior in number, on the preſumption of receiving able ſupport from that Prince; but the Duke, pretending to have taken up arms merely in the view of eaſing the people, deceived the King's expectations, and left him to ſuſtain the principal weight of the Engliſh army, without attempting to afford the ſmalleſt aid.

" Charles, too late, found himſelf unable to carry on ſo unequal a conteſt. Moſt of his people were cut off, and he himſelf obliged to fly from the purſuit of his enemies, who were gaining faſt upon his ſteps, when a ſervant of the hereditary Keeper paſſing that way, and learning his difficult and dangerous ſituation, diſguiſed him like a Monk of the Order, and by that means eluding the ſearch of his followers, conveyed him through by-paths and unfrequented places, to a ſafe and commodious retreat in the Rock of Narbonne.—That maſſy ſilver lamp, which ſtill hangs from the roof there, was the gift of this Prince, in commemoration of the ſervice thus afforded him.

" Some years antecedent to this period, there is a celebrated *bon mot* recorded in the archives of the Rock, of Philip of Valois; who, after the battle of Creſſy, being vanquiſhed, and in ſearch of an aſylum, arrived about midnight at what was formerly the door of the Hermit's cell, and requeſted it might be opened for him. The old man, who then reſided in it, demanded, with the caution of age, to know who wanted admittance?—'*Ouvrez*,' ſaid the King, '*c'eſt la fortune de la France**.'—The latter Monarch alſo left conſiderable memorials of his gratitude.

" In ſhort, it is needleſs to enumerate all the particular circumſtances relating to ſuch events. I only wiſh to give you a competent idea of its former importance, and the advantages derived in conſequence of it, that your wonder may be leſſened on the diſcloſure of its various conveniences and treaſures; together with the air of grandeur ſtill viſible in many of the apartments, which might otherwiſe be difficult to account for.

" I ſhall, therefore," continued the Counteſs, " only add to this long narrative, by ſaying that, in proceſs of time, the inhabitants of the Monaſtery were expelled for an irregular and licentious courſe

* Vide Millot's Elements of the Hiſtory of France.

of

of life, and their place afterwards filled by a ſiſterhood of Nuns, whoſe Order has ſince occupied it. Upon this event happening, the office of hereditary Keeper came again into the hands of the laity, and at length was inveſted in the family of ſome of my anceſtors, who built the preſent Caſtle, and it has remained in our Houſe ever ſince that period.

" Some time prior to my father's poſſeſſion of it, the office of hereditary Keeper had become merely a ſinecure, being little attended to, and almoſt entirely conſigned to oblivion by our laſt three Sovereigns. However, we have always obſerved the preſcribed ceremonial, under which it has uniformly deſcended to us, accompanied by every one of its ancient formalities. Under theſe reſtrictions I received it; and under theſe reſtrictions, I entruſt it to my ſucceſſor."

Madame de Narbonne here ſtopped; but ſoon after, with a deep ſigh, and in a tremulous voice, thus continued her narrative.

CHAP. VI.

" The temple ev'ry moment grew,
" And ampler viſtas open'd to my view;
" Upward the columns ſhoot, the roofs aſcend,
" And arches widen, and long aiſles extend."

POPE.

" FORTUNATELY for me, I was initiated in the myſteries of this place before an event happened which, on my own account, rendered the acquiſition of the ſecret a matter of infinite importance. The occurrence I allude to, occaſioned a minute ſcrutiny to be made into the interior ſituation of the rock; and the reſult of the enquiry was productive of ſeveral alterations, which added conſiderably to its convenience. Some of the apartments were privately repaired, put into decent order,

order, and comfortably furniſhed; while others, by degrees, were afterwards added to the number, as time and circumſtances ſuited for the purpoſe.

"Misfortunes are ſaid to love a train;—mine, indeed, literally verified the old adage, and the world, in conſequence, became indifferent to me. My attachment to this ſpot proportionably ſtrengthened, as a predilection for ſolitude gained ground; and the greateſt gratification I long experienced, was found in the lonely hours I contrived to ſpend in the Rock of Narbonne.

"For the better ſecurity and convenience of the exiſting inhabitant, there was a ſubterraneous paſſage formerly made to the Monaſtery and the Caſtle; the latter, however, beſides being rather in a ruinous ſtate, I ſeldom uſe for another reaſon: in times of peace it was unneceſſary, as the receſs, or ſaloon (as it is frequently called) might then be reſorted to with leſs precaution; and now, conſidering it as a certain and ſecure paſſage, that may one day be of importance when others, leading the ſame way, are unſafe to venture upon, I wiſh to keep ſuſpicion at a diſtance, by avoiding every poſſible circumſtance that might create ſenſations of curioſity on the ſubject. I ſhall afterwards explain my motives for beſtowing ſo much attention on the improvements of the rock. At preſent," ſaid

Madame de Narbonne, wiping her eyes, "I fear your patience, and my own ſtrength are both nearly exhauſted; yet I would gladly conclude that part of my narrative more immediately connected with the foregoing diſcourſe. Let me, therefore, ſtill add a few words more on the topic.

"It is requiſite to inform you, that much concealed treaſure remains within theſe walls, for purpoſes you are yet to be acquainted with; part of which we will examine, if you pleaſe, before our return to the Caſtle. When conſigned to your diſpoſal, remember it be put to the intended uſe—beſtow it in affording ſhelter to any of our unfortunate Nobility, or others who may ſtand in need of aſſiſtance. A family of dependants, who, from father to ſon, have long remained under the Houſe of Narbonne, reſide in a ſmall abode hard-by the rock; the fidelity of their anceſtors has been tried and unſhaken by time or chance, for a couple of centuries at leaſt. The preſent miſtreſs of the cottage is your acquaintance, and my nurſe;—ſhe bears me the affection of a real parent, and has proved faithful to the confidence unavoidably repoſed in her.

"Her huſband, and ſome others of the family, were neceſſarily entruſted with the leſs material myſteries of the rock; nor was this any encroachment

on

on the original inſtitution: for it allowed of ſuch a confidence being placed in a certain number of the lower order, under the ſpecified reſtrictions, when interior repairs demanded their aſſiſtance. Theſe people have long officiated in this way; they know the conſequence of a breach of promiſe, and would not attempt the violation of their oath for worlds. It is true, the former laws cannot now be binding, becauſe no adequate means remain to enforce their execution; but where the heart is right, and the principles honeſt, change of times, or alterations in Governments do not affect our ideas of moral rectitude.

"Though every political tie to ſecrecy be therefore at an end, yet, well-inſtructed in the value I ſet on this place, I have not, nor can have the ſmalleſt doubt of their faithfulneſs and prudence; of courſe I am perfectly perſuaded you will find them, upon trial, as firmly attached to your intereſt, and obſervant of your injunctions, as they have ever been to mine on many afflicting occaſions. I have already prepared my nurſe for what is to follow; and the previous opinion ſhe has formed of your character, renders her willing to coincide with my views.

"But it is now late.—I muſt reſerve the moſt intereſting part of the communication for another

another evening; indeed this was my intention from the firſt. Let us then proceed to the object of our preſent examination; the allotted period uſually appropriated to the rock is already nearly elapſed, and we muſt therefore make the beſt of our time. In our progreſs, I will give you a definition of what is now requiſite to be known.—Here, in the meanwhile, is the repoſitory of the treaſure which I ſpoke of."

She aſcended a flight of ſteps, ſimilar to thoſe Charlotte had formerly noticed; they appeared to be merely conſtructed for the benefit of the proſpect from the high caſement, and wound round the ſecond pillar on that ſide. The Counteſs then touched a ſecret ſpring, and a ſmall concealed door immediately opened. The ſpace for admittance was extremely confined; they both entered, however, and winding up a few more ſteps, ſoon came to another door, which opened into the pillar itſelf. Here the treaſure appeared to the aſtoniſhed view of Mademoiſelle de Cordet, almoſt beyond credibility. A number of caſkets, of all ſorts and ſizes, were ranged round the inſide, and ſo fitted to the hollow niches, produced by the exterior flutings, and other ornamental projections, as to defy every chance of diſcovery, unleſs previouſly acquainted with their ſituation.

Theſe

Theſe repoſitories were nearly filled with the wealth of foregoing ages. A conſiderable portion, however, had lately been conveyed there under the direction of Madame de Narbonne herſelf, as a proper precaution againſt future emergencies.—Amongſt the latter, was a great part of her own family jewels, the immenſe value of which made their preſervation a matter of ſome conſequence.

The ladies now deſcended from this pillar, and proceeded to a ſmaller one behind it; this contained large ſums of money, medals, and coins of various deſcriptions.

They next examined one on the oppoſite ſide of the caſement, the contents of which appeared to be a great quantity of gold and ſilver plate, whoſe form and faſhion announced its immenſe antiquity. Much of it bore the Royal arms of France; ſome of a more recent date, thoſe of the Houſe of Narbonne; and all beſpoke the once affluent ſituation of thoſe to whom it had formerly belonged. Several richly ornamented crucifixes, and maſſy Saints of infinite value, formed likewiſe a part of the catalogue. A ſmall crown, curiouſly wrought, and profuſely adorned with jewels, claimed particular notice: it had been worn by the Royal favourite during her concealment; and while thus adorned, ſhe probably fancied herſelf no leſs a Queen than

ſhe, whoſe huſband's affections were ſo cruelly eſtranged from their legal channel.

Another pillar was now reſorted to; its contents were leſs valuable, though not leſs curious: they conſiſted of a variety of ingenious machinery, and exhibited the amazing powers of the human mind, in the different conſtructions and uſes each ſeemed intended for. Some of them were models of the rock in miniature, extremely well executed; others very ſmall figures in wax-work, done to the life—they almoſt appeared to breathe!—many of theſe were repreſentations taken from the Iliad of Homer; and the whole, or at leaſt the greateſt part of them, had probably been the amuſement, as well as occupation of thoſe recluſes, whoſe genius proved of a mechanical nature, and found a reſource in ſuch employments from the dull uniformity and *tædium* incident to a life of confinement, in a ſituation ſo ſolitary as the Rock of Narbonne.

Theſe pillars, thus artfully contrived, had every outward appearance of ſolidity, and no poſſible ſuſpicion could have been entertained to the contrary, without ocular demonſtration of their real conſtruction.

Several of the ſmaller apartments were next explored: one of theſe was ſtored with liquors, and ſuch kind of proviſions as could moſt eaſily be preſerved

preſerved without injury from time; of this deſcription were different ſorts of grain, particularly rice, and a great variety of dried fruits.

In a neighbouring chamber were placed one or two large wardrobes of a very antique form;—theſe the Counteſs unlocked: they contained an aſſortment of wearing-apparel, well choſen, and much of the work beautifully executed. Charlotte thought ſhe recollected having ſeen ſome parts of it before; the ſtyle of finiſhing what was done in colours, was too elegant and ſtriking not to be recognized on a ſecond inſpection; and it inſtantly occurred to her remembrance that theſe were ſome of the pieces of needlework ſhe had frequently admired at the Convent, while the Nuns were employed upon them.

The Counteſs now led her to the end of a little gallery, and opened a door on one ſide of it; the apartment to which it conducted them, was rather of a leſs ſize than any of the others, but it was furniſhed in a more modern and pleaſing manner: a few ſmall bookcaſes, a harpſichord, a harp, ſeveral other muſical inſtruments, ſome fine paintings, and a collection of uſeful or ornamental pieces of furniture, rendered it not only more pleaſing, but likewiſe more convenient than many of the other rooms. What ſurpriſed Charlotte, however, was an appearance of

its

its being recently inhabited. There was a work-table covered with ſhells, part of which had already, with much taſte, been appropriated to the ornamental decorations of a ſmall receſs between two of the bookcaſes; and, in the ſpace below a beautiful window (which, though of diminutive ſize, was exactly proportioned according to the Grecian ſtyle of architecture) was placed an eaſel, with the neceſſary apparatus for painting. Madame de Narbonne approached it, glanced her eye over the artiſt's performance, and immediately, either through chance or deſign, directed Charlotte's attention to the other ſide of the chamber.

At this moment the notes of the nightingale were again heard, and Charlotte advanced nearer to the caſement. There the ſame proſpect preſented itſelf as formerly: a great expanſe of water glittered in the moonbeams at a diſtance, the intervening ſpace reflected the ſhadows of the rock, and the waving woods in its vicinity; for the moon herſelf had now mounted higher, and ſhone from the other ſide of the ſtony maſs they were exploring.

Scarcely had the ſongſter of the night poured forth a few harmonious ſtrains, before the ſound of muſic, ſoft, ſlow, and ſolemn, ſtruck upon her ear! It proceeded from a neighbouring apartment, and was the ſame beautiful air ſhe recollected liſtening

to

to, in paſſing that way on her return from the Convent. The remembrance of this circumſtance made her turn ſuddenly round, to obſerve from what direction the ſound iſſued, and in doing ſo, ſhe ſaw Madame de Narbonne cautiouſly open and ſhut a concealed door on that ſide of the chamber from whence it ſeemed to come; the latter deſign was not, however, accompliſhed before Charlotte diſcovered the flowing robes of a female figure, who was in the act of diſappearing as the Counteſs ſaid ſomething in a whiſper, and cloſed the door again. The muſic was heard no more, nor did Madame de Narbonne take any notice of the incident.

In a few minutes after, Mademoiſelle de Cordet was requeſted to walk that way. The place had the appearance of a ſmall dreſſing-room, and a muſic-book lay dropped on the floor. Charlotte's curioſity was once more predominant; ſhe regarded the ſpot with a ſcrutinizing eye, and at length perceived a door in a dark corner, through which ſhe ſuppoſed the concealed perſon had eſcaped from her view, when the Counteſs ſpoke to her. She recollected, however, that every thing was to be explained in time, and therefore aſked no queſtions on any ſemblance of myſtery, when her conducter choſe to be ſilent.

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The ultimatum of the preſent inveſtigation was now attained, and they proceeded onwards to their firſt entrance at the ſaloon. During their progreſs Madame de Narbonne deſcribed the different places through which they paſſed, and gave her young companion every poſſible information relative to her future conduct reſpecting this important truſt.

The train of thought this diſcourſe gave birth to, inſenſibly occupied their minds as they ſlowly returned to the Caſtle.

In anſwer to ſomething Madame de Narbonne had ſaid on the ſubject, it was remarked by Charlotte, that the more ſhe reflected upon it, the greater was her aſtoniſhment at ſuch a proof of human labour and perſeverance, as was exhibited in the interior conſtruction of this wonderful rock.

"The work appears to me ſo immenſe," continued ſhe, "as almoſt to ſurpaſs the extent of human ability; and ſcarcely any thing leſs than the evidence of my own ſenſes could convince me of its poſſible exiſtence."

"Yet it is not, nevertheleſs, beyond the limits of credibility," anſwered the Counteſs, "when cauſes and circumſtances are deliberately taken into the account. As to the perſeverance you mention, ſafety and convenience lead us on imperceptibly to

accompliſh

accompliſh what is judged requiſite for their attainment. The hiſtory of the world ſhews us that mankind have been ſubject to wants and dangers ſince the firſt creation of the univerſe to the preſent moment: that Nature, or Providence, which you chuſe to ſtyle it, ſhould therefore point out perſeverance in the means for providing againſt their various conſequences, or removing them, is ſurely not wonderful. In regard to the labour neceſſary for completing theſe excavations, that cannot excite much ſurpriſe, more than the other circumſtance, when we conſider the portion of time beſtowed upon them, through the courſe of ſo many ſucceeding generations.

" Beſides, many of the apartments were formerly caverns, more than half made by Nature to the hands of the workman. In ſeveral of them there was little to do, beyond the removal of the rubbiſh they contained, and beſtowing a degree of ſmoothneſs on the ſurface of the walls.

" At any rate, take it in what light you pleaſe, it is certainly by no means ſo aſtoniſhing a ſtructure as many other productions of art and genius, well-known to be deſigned and executed by human exertions alone, and in all ages.

" For an inſtance of what I aſſert, we need not go farther than the celebrated Mountain of Malpas, which

which was cut through to admit the paſſage of the Royal canal in Languedoc, that an inland communication might be accompliſhed between the Atlantic and Mediterranean Ocean.

" The effect produced on the ſpectator is ſublime in the higheſt degree: a large flight of ſteps, at either end, permits the gratification of curioſity by the minuteſt ſurvey of it. One may deſcend into the excavations, and walk through the mountain along the ſide of the canal; the length of it is more than ſix hundred feet, and the perpendicular height, from the water to the ſurface of the incumbent earth, is upwards of two hundred feet. A great part of the mountain has been vaulted at a vaſt expence, in the apprehenſion of its falling, from the prodigious height. I forget the exact breadth of the canal; but though the diſtance hollowed through the ground is very conſiderable, yet the light is perfectly admitted. This was once the greateſt obſtacle to the junction of the two ſeas, and its execution has immortalized the famous Riquet, whom Louis XIV. employed in the enterpriſe.

" Thoſe who have ſeen and examined this prodigious undertaking, accompliſhed, comparatively ſpeaking, in ſo ſhort a period, will ſcarcely afterwards expreſs any wonder at the Rock of Narbonne,

bonne, the work of ſo many ages, and even inferior in ſize to Malpas.

" I could produce many other inſtances to leſſen your ſurpriſe, of the ſame nature, but it is immaterial at preſent to trouble you with them. Your own reading and acquired knowledge muſt recal them to remembrance without my aſſiſtance."

" I confeſs," ſaid Charlotte, " we ought not to confine, in idea, the limits of human abilities in others, becauſe our own may not be comprehenſive enough to reach the ſame height of conception. I have never ſeen the Mountain of Malpas, but your account of it, Madame, has conſiderably diminiſhed my aſtoniſhment on the ſubject of the rock."

Charlotte was proceeding to make ſome other remarks, but obſerving they had now got to the gates of the Caſtle, ſhe dropped the diſcourſe, after begging leave to remind Madame de Narbonne of her promiſe to ſeize an early opportunity for the renewal of the narrative, of which ſhe was impatient to hear the concluſion.

The Counteſs, with a heavy ſigh, aſſured her, that though the recital might be neceſſary, ſhe would probably find the gratification of her curioſity dearly purchaſed at the expence of her feelings; but that, nevertheleſs, as the melancholy theme muſt be purſued,

ſued, ſhe would doubtleſſly continue it, whenever a proper opportunity again offered for the purpoſe. Saying this, ſhe abruptly turned away, and paſſed on to her own apartment.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet underſtood from her manner that the Counteſs wiſhed to be alone; ſhe therefore directed her ſteps towards the drawing-room, in queſt of a favourite publication they had lately been reading.

As ſhe reached the large window in the ſtaircaſe, a figure in white appeared at intervals, apparently gliding through the ſhrubbery. In a few minutes it vaniſhed, and ſhe perceived it no more.

The moon was too bright to admit of any miſtake; ſhe ſaw it diſtinctly, and it ſeemed to be winding through the path ſhe and the Counteſs had juſt quitted.

"Another myſtery," ſaid Charlotte to herſelf; "but all is to be explained in time;—let me therefore have patience."

She fixed her eyes a little longer on the ſhrubbery, and then repaired to the drawing-room.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII

" ——— It is a ſtrange diſpoſed time;
" But men may conſtrue things after their faſhion,
" Clean from the purpoſe of the things themſelves,
" As they do this."

SHAKESPEAR.

IN the drawing-room ſhe found two or three gentlemen of the neighbourhood aſſembled, and ſo deeply engaged in converſation, that her entrance was unperceived by the whole party.

As it had for ſome time been no uncommon thing for a variety of ſtrangers to viſit at the Caſtle, Charlotte was not much ſurpriſed to ſee that was the caſe at preſent, though ſhe knew none were expected a few hours before.

Not in a temper, however, to join in indiſcriminate converſation, and wiſhing to enjoy her own thoughts, ſhe was upon the point of turning back, when a ſentence or two, which appeared of conſequence, attracted her notice.

The confidence already repoſed in her by Madame de Narbonne, as well as what remained to be diſcloſed, rendered it neceſſary to become miſtreſs, if poſſible, of every political occurrence, or at leaſt to endeavour at acquiring ſome knowledge of them; ſhe therefore changed her original deſign, and ſoftly advanced to one of the windows.

Hitherto occupied with her own reflections, ſhe had paid little attention to the gueſts, and now wiſhed to avoid their obſervation, till ſhe could diſcover the ſubject upon which they diſcourſed.

They ſpoke low, however, and were placed at a diſtance from her, on the other ſide of the room.

Wearied, at length, with ſtanding in the receſs of the window, ſhe gently drew a chair towards it; the noiſe this movement unavoidably occaſioned reached the gentlemen, one of whom looking haſtily round, immediately left his companions, and approached her.

It was Mr. Haſtings himſelf!—and the meeting of courſe proved mutually productive of pleaſure.

After

After the firſt compliments were over, Charlotte's expreſſive countenance ſeemed to ſay, that another viſiter would alſo have been welcome.—The look of ſcrutiny caſt on the reſt of the gentlemen was not unobſerved by Mr. Haſtings.

"No," ſaid he, archly, "he is not one of the number."

"Who?" cried Charlotte, withdrawing her eyes, and deeply bluſhing, "I don't comprehend your meaning, Monſieur."

"Your's, however, if I may judge from appearance, is not ſo difficult to fathom," replied Haſtings, with a good-humoured ſhake of the hand, and another arch glance as he ſpoke.

"I have often heard of the blunt character aſcribed to Engliſhmen," returned ſhe, attempting to rally in his own ſtyle, "and for once I can ſpeak from experience.—But pray may I aſk the ſubject of your converſation when I entered the drawing-room?"

"What! before you enquire for our wounded champion!—Fie! fie! I thought you had poſſeſſed more humanity than this comes to.—My diſpoſition, however, is of a ſofter nature, and will not permit me to be guilty of ſuch a ſoleciſm in gratitude. Liſten then, and attend to the recital of a blunt Engliſhman.—My friend Montague, who,

on ſome occaſions, is not gifted with a ſuper-abundant portion of patience, ſtill remains with his mother at Bareges, where I wiſhed (you know I am a 'blunt Engliſhman,') to have continued with him ſome time longer, as Mrs. Montague's health would not yet admit of leaving that place; but the fellow has ſomething of his countrymen in him, as well as others whom you chuſe to compliment in that way," added he, bowing ludicrouſly; "not another moment would he allow me to ſtay with them—and for what, pray?—Why, faith, becauſe he took it into his wiſe head to fancy my ſervices might be neceſſary at the Caſtle of Narbonne!—And here therefore I am, in obedience to the orders of my young commander; who, if I may judge by a certain air of diſappointment, viſible on a certain expreſſive countenance, had much better have come this way himſelf, and left me as his ſubſtitute at Bareges."

"Ridiculous!" cried Charlotte, preſenting her hand to him a ſecond time with a cheerful look; "how can you ſuppoſe any perſon would be more welcome than yourſelf at Narbonne?"

"One frequently, indeed, ſuppoſes ſtrange things," replied Haſtings; "but where poſſibilities exiſt, what is probable will ſometimes occur."

"It

"It is time, however, to be ſerious," ſaid Charlotte, interrupting him abruptly.

"It is ſo," anſwered Haſtings, without permitting her to proceed. "The ſubject of our diſcourſe, which you enquired after, is rather of an extraordinary nature; as for its authenticity, I pretend not to vouch for that circumſtance; in the fluctuating period of civil commotions, common report is not generally entitled to much credit, neither is it prudent totally to diſregard it;—though I confeſs, for my own part, I am rather apt to be a little ſceptical in moſt caſes where ocular demonſtration is unattainable."

"My faith," ſaid Charlotte, ſmiling, "is not more extenſive, on ſuch occaſions, than your own. But pray what is now to be the freſh topic of wonder?"

"Why a very ſtrange one indeed," replied Haſtings, "and, in my opinion, highly improbable. It is rumoured that the Emperor Joſeph contracted a private marriage, or at leaſt formed a connection (for it is not exactly ſaid which) with a French lady of rank, ſeveral years ago, by whom he left a daughter; this daughter, we are told, has, ſomehow or other, become an object of conſequence to the diſſatisfied individuals of both parties, who have entered into an agreement to proclaim

her Queen of France, in preference to the male or female branches of the exiſting Royal Family, whoſe pretenſions are to be ſet aſide in her favour, and all their future claims declared null and void for that purpoſe."

Here Mr. Haſtings was abruptly interrupted in the delivery of his intelligence by M. Larong, the little democrat formerly mentioned, who entered the room at this juncture, and joining them at the window, declared, with his uſual violence of geſture and voice, that the thing was ridiculous to ſuppoſe; that it was abſurd and impoſſible in the extreme to imagine the French nation, after ſo many ſevere ſtruggles for liberty and republicaniſm, would again ſubmit to wear the chains of Royalty, rivetted by the hands of a woman.

"Beſides, Sir," added he, with additional importance of manner, "is there not a law of the moſt forcible nature ſtill in being, againſt any ſuch innovation?—I never heard," added he, with a ſneer, "that the Convention had aboliſhed that which poſitively declares in the ſtrongeſt terms, *in terram Salicam mulieres ne ſuccedant*; and do you think, without their conſent, this girl—this mere child, an alien too, could be ſet on the throne of France, in defiance of the ruling powers of the country?—No ſuch thing—take my word for it;—the whole is

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the fabrication of ſome treacherous emigrant, who either wiſhes to ſound the public ſentiments, or haſten the intended Sovereign's progreſs to the pre-eminence of the guillotine. It is certain, a more effectual method could not be taken for the latter. Thoſe laws you know, Monſieur, have only been abrogated which were deemed inimical to freedom; but not any that, like this, might juſtly be looked upon as one of its bulwarks."

"As for the ſtreſs you lay upon this point," replied Haſtings, who knew the haranguer ſuppoſed himſelf acquainted with the ſecret ſpring of ſome circumſtances he (Haſtings) wiſhed to fathom the depth of; "as for the ſtreſs, Sir, you lay upon that point, I ſuſpect, on examination, it may be found ill placed, and the law you ſo ſtrenuouſly contend for, conſequently ſet aſide without much difficulty."

"What, Sir!" cried his antagoniſt, "ſet aſide *in terram Salicam mulieres ne ſuccedant!*—Good God, Sir, you might as well talk of annihilating the Convention itſelf!"

"Why, probably," anſwered Haſtings, with an expreſſive ſmile, "ſuch might be the conſequence, were the former aboliſhed in favour of the lady we have been ſpeaking of.—But pray anſwer me one queſtion:—Though your countrymen pretend that

the Salick Land is in fact the realm of France, and Pharamond the founder of this barrier to female ſucceſſion, how then come your own authors to affirm, that the Salick Land lies between the waters of the Sala and Elve, in Germany?—We have it from hiſtory, where it is faithfully recorded, that Charles the Great, having ſubdued the Saxons, left behind a number of French, whom he ſettled in that country; and that theſe deſpiſing the German women, for the depravity of their manners and lives, eſtabliſhed then this law, which expreſſly ſays, no female ſhould be inheritrix in the Salick Land.

"Now this Salick Land, as I have already ſaid, lies between the Elve and Sala, and was afterwards known by the denomination of Meiſers. Will you then ſay that this ſame law was deviſed for the realm of France?—Why the French did not poſſeſs the Salick Land till upwards of four hundred years after the demiſe of King Pharamond, the ſuppoſed founder of this law; he died within the year 426, and Charles the Great did not ſubdue the Saxons, nor ſettle the French beyond the River of Sala before the year 805."

Here Mr. Haſtings gave them many intereſting particulars of the hiſtory of France, unneceſſary to trouble the reader with at preſent; but which plainly

plainly ſerved to ſhew that King Pepin's title, and Hugh Capet's claim, as well as the late unfortunate Monarch's poſſeſſion, all appeared to hold in right and title of the female line.

"Hence," added he, "ſhould ſuch aſcend the throne, by the freewill and choice of the ſovereign people, it would not in fact infringe on any ancient law, while otherwiſe proceeding in conformity with exiſting, and new enacted ones.

"Nevertheleſs, for my own part, I look upon the idea of ſuch an occurrence as merely illuſive; and am convinced no dependance can be put in any flying reports, in the preſent ſtate of the country; nor do I indeed wiſh, for many reaſons, to ſee a revolution of this nature accompliſhed."

The confeſſion with which Mr. Haſtings concluded his diſcourſe, reconciled his antagoniſt to the ſentiments promulgated at the beginning of it; and, by a little farther manœuvring on the part of the Engliſhman, ſuch hints were inſenſibly drawn from Larong and another perſon in company, as ſufficiently ſatisfied him that the Royaliſts had as yet nothing of material conſequence to flatter themſelves with from any general change of opinion in the Pariſians, unleſs their late victory could be purſued with advantage. Nay, the contrary was

rather to be feared; for he could no longer entertain the ſmalleſt doubt that every preparation was carrying on to oppoſe them with additional vigour.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

" The firſt bringer of unwelcome news
" Hath but a loſing office; and his tongue
" Sounds ever after like a ſullen bell,
" Remember'd, tolling a departed friend."

SHAKESPEAR.

FATIGUED and overcome by the exertions of the evening, Madame de Narbonne declined her young friend's offer of attendance, when ſhe retired to her apartment.

Early on the following morning, Mademoiſelle de Cordet received a ſummons to Clermont, which ſhe immediately prepared to obey, and riſing, haſtened to the door of the Counteſs.—There, however, ſhe learned that Madame was juſt beginning

to enjoy ſome repoſe, after having ſpent a reſtleſs and uncomfortable night.

As ſuch was the caſe, and ſhe propoſed returning again to Narbonne in the evening, it was judged beſt to leave a verbal meſſage to that effect, and reſerve her other intelligence for a future opportunity. Indeed the latter appeared of ſo little moment, that ſhe thought it ſcarcely worth the trouble of repetition, and of courſe felt no anxiety reſpecting the communication of what was merely conſidered in the trifling light of an idle, unauthenticated rumour.

On her arrival, ſhe found M. de Clermont ſtill confined to his chamber, and Madame in high ſpirits, coquetting with a young Officer in the National uniform, who, from ſeveral obſervations made upon his conduct by ſome of the family, had apparently other deſigns than gallantry in view; at leaſt the young ladies entertained a ſuſpicion of this nature, and wiſhing to conſult with their couſin, on the propriety of mentioning their remarks to M. de Clermont, had requeſted her preſence for that purpoſe; as every hint from them on the ſubject had been exceedingly reſented by their mother.

Another day's patience, however, might have ſaved them all this trouble; for a few hours after Charlotte's arrival, the object of their anxiety

departed from Clermont, in conſequence of ſome letters he received by an expreſs at that period.

The effects of his abſence were ſenſibly experienced for ſome time, from the unpleaſant change it produced in the temper and diſpoſition of Madame de Clermont; but the weak muſt ſubmit to the ſtrong—ſuch is the practical ſyſtem of the world!—and therefore her daughters were obliged to bear it as well as they were able.

Charlotte was likewiſe forced to do penance before ſhe left them, and run the gauntlet of complimentary repetitions, and tedious details of fine things ſaid, done, or looked, by the favourite republican hero to the lady of the manſion.

After obtaining M. de Clermont's promiſe to reviſit the Caſtle as ſoon as he could poſſibly venture from home, Mademoiſelle de Cordet purſued her way back to Narbonne.

There ſhe found the Counteſs waiting her return, and ready to repair again to the rock; thither therefore they directed their courſe; but, ere they reached the outer gate of the Caſtle, Mr. Haſtings appeared with a letter in his hand, and informed them that a courier had juſt paſſed from Paris, who was proceeding with intelligence to the Commander in La Vendee, purporting that the majority of the inhabitants of the metropolis were

once

once more on the eve of a counter-revolution, which had for its baſis a deſign to place the crown on the head of a female, whoſe goodneſs of heart, and mild diſpoſition were ſaid to be ſuch as would enſure them the tranquil, equitable, and free enjoyment of all thoſe rights and privileges they had already ſhed ſo much blood to obtain.

"In ſhort, Mademoiſelle," continued Mr. Haſtings, addreſſing Charlotte more particularly, "what we conſidered the preceding night as the idle fabrication of party, has now received further confirmation, and ſuch as, at that time, I conceived it totally unworthy to obtain. Indeed ſo little importance had I annexed to this report, that I did not even recollect to inform Madame of the circumſtance, during the ſhort period I ſpent with her, previous to your return from Clermont;—and faith, even now I confeſs my incredulity is not much on the wane, when I coolly reflect on the glaring abſurdity of this improbable ſtory."

"But pray," ſaid the Counteſs, "with a faltering voice, and a look of anxious ſolicitude, "what do you allude to, for I am quite ignorant of the whole affair?"

Haſtings immediately related the intelligence of the foregoing evening, reſpecting the rumour ſet afloat in regard to the ſuppoſed daughter of Joſeph II.

and

and treated the whole as the legend of ſome deſigning politician. He added, that what proved ſtill more extraordinary, none of the partiſans of this future Sovereign ſeemed even to know where ſhe was to be found; though all agreed in the idea that ſuch a perſon exiſted ſomewhere in a ſtate of concealment!

Haſtings was now beginning to comment pretty freely on the ſubject, when turning his eyes accidentally on the Counteſs, he beheld her pale and trembling, leaning upon the gate, unable to ſupport herſelf, and viſibly upon the point of fainting.

Not ſuſpecting that his own intelligence had produced ſuch a change, he gave it, and its firſt propagators, very heartily to the devil; curſing himſelf for thus letting it ſo far occupy his attention, as to turn it from the ſituation of Madame de Narbonne. He flew inſtantly to her aſſiſtance, offered every aid in his power, and prepared, with the help of Charlotte, to conduct her back to the Caſtle.

The Counteſs moved not however, nor for ſome time took any notice of their united efforts to ſerve her.

At laſt raiſing her head, ſhe ſighed deeply, and, in a low feeble voice, entreated Mr. Haſtings would not

not mention her indiſpoſition to any perſon whatever; but have the goodneſs to leave her, and return to the ſtrangers he had quitted in the Caſtle. The freſh air, ſhe ſaid, generally proved her beſt phyſician; ſhe therefore meant to enjoy it a little longer, and finding herſelf better, would conſequently continue her walk.

Mr. Haſtings, nevertheleſs, ſtill expreſſed much reluctance at the thoughts of departing while ſhe evidently appeared ſo unwell.

His perſeverance fatigued her; ſhe leant her head again on the gate, and waved her hand for him to begone. Charlotte, who knew her temper, deſired him in a whiſper to comply with her requeſt, and, with a low bow, he immediately obeyed her.

In a few minutes after his departure, Madame de Narbonne ſtarted from her muſing poſture, and ſupporting herſelf on Charlotte's arm, ſlowly proceeded down the long winding avenue that led to the rock.

Not a word was uttered by either of them; the Counteſs ſeemed agitated too powerfully for language; her emotion increaſed as they drew nearer the end of their progreſs.—In the cloſeſt and moſt intricate part of the labyrinth, a ruſtling amongſt the underwood, on one ſide, alarmed them.—

Madame

Madame de Narbonne graſped the arm of her companion, and recoiled a few ſteps;—the noiſe approached!

"Ah good God!" exclaimed the Counteſs, in a voice of wild affright, "all is diſcovered!—what will now become of——"

At this inſtant of fearful expectation their terror was happily relieved by a diſtinct view of its cauſe: a large buck, who had wandered from the park, ruſhed acroſs the path, and bruſhing aſide the oppoſing branches with his wide extended antlers, ſpeedily left them to purſue their way without further moleſtation.

Madame de Narbonne raiſed her eyes and claſped hands to heaven, in token of grateful acknowledgment for her preſent ſafety, and again taking hold of Charlotte's arm, they ſoon reached the vaulted paſſage.

As they advanced to the ruſtic gate, the ſteps of the Counteſs became quicker; they paſſed through it, and ſhe haſtened on ſtill more eagerly, while an univerſal trepidation ſeized her whole frame, and apparently threatened to overcome the temporary degree of fortitude ſhe had hitherto ſtruggled to retain.

Charlotte

Charlotte remarked that her hand trembled violently as ſhe unlocked the door of the ſaloon; but ſhe followed in ſilence, and with an emotion ſcarcely inferior to what was felt by her conductor.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

" 'Mid cloiſter'd ſolitary tombs I ſtray,
" Deſpair and horror lead the cheerleſs way."
.....
" For thee my mem'ry learns to ſmart,
" Sure ev'ry vein contains a bleeding heart!"

SAVAGE.

ON entering the ſaloon, Madame de Narbonne threw herſelf upon the couch, and remained for ſome minutes buried in deep meditation; after which ſhe aroſe, and lifting her penſive eyes to heaven, with a heavy ſigh, advanced again to the portico, from whence, turning to the right, they proceeded down a ſhort arched paſſage, ſupported on one ſide by a range of pillars, thickly overſhaded by trees of an ancient and venerable appearance.

At

At the fartheſt end of this place, the Counteſs ſtopped before a large old Gothic door, and opening it, with a melancholy look, deſired Charlotte to enter. She obeyed, and immediately found herſelf in a noble and beautiful chapel, from the ceiling of which two lamps hung in ſuch a direction as to throw a portion of light on every ſurrounding object; they were of ſilver, rich and maſſy, like thoſe ſhe had formerly ſeen, but emitted a more gloomy ſhade, and appeared to tincture the *tout enſemble* with an air of awful ſolemnity.

The vaulted roof re-echoed to their footſteps, as now, with a ſlower pace, they moved up the long winding aiſle that led to the altar.

The Counteſs continued to approach it in ſilence —her eyes appeared rivetted to one particular ſpot on the right, from whence they were only raiſed at intervals, in mental ejaculation.

During this period, Charlotte remarked, as they paſſed along, the various ornamental figures ſculptured upon the walls on either ſide of them. Here almoſt breathing prophets ſeemed burſting from the inanimate ſtone, to call erring mortals to a timely repentance.—There meek-eyed martyrs, wrapped in reſignation, calmly ſmiled on the hand that lighted their funeral pile, and viewed with celeſtial compoſure the devouring flame aſcending for their earthly

earthly deſtruction.—In another direction, pictured cherubs tuned their well-mimicked harps to groups of liſtening angels, whoſe every feature bore ſuch ſtriking proofs of harmonic ſenſibility, that Charlotte almoſt fancied ſhe heard more than ideal ſtrains proceeding from the imaged muſicians; ſuch as might be ſuppoſed capable of ſoothing the afflictions of the mind, beyond the interruption of worldly viciſſitudes, or human anguiſh!

Near this ſeraphic choir appeared a penitential Magdalen, unadorned, and looſely veiled; her thoughts apparently ſoared ſuperior to the vanity of dreſs, ſome articles of which lay unheeded at her feet; one hand ſmote her palpitating boſom, while the other was raiſed with her humid eyes to heaven.

On the oppoſite wall the paſſion of our Saviour was portrayed in various compartments. Above this latter repreſentation was a large convex glaſs of curious workmanſhip, in which his angelic form appeared amid a thouſand circling rays, from the poſition of one of the lamps near it; the bright trembling beams collected into one focus, fell back by reflection, and produced a radiance ſo divine, that the ſparkling luſtre ſeemed almoſt of celeſtial conſtruction.

While

While Charlotte now gazed, and now moved on, abſorbed in the contemplation of ſcenes ſo beautiful and unexpected, the Counteſs, whoſe ſilence and equally irregular motion had hitherto afforded leiſure for obſervation, ſuddenly ſtopped, and pointing to a tombſtone juſt before them—

"There, beneath that monumental marble," ſaid ſhe, in a tremulous yet ſolemn voice, "lies almoſt all that was ever dear to me in exiſtence!"

She pauſed—her looks acquired a certain degree of dejected wildneſs, and her boſom laboured with throbbing woe as ſhe ſpoke;—the exertion overcame her, and dropping her head on the ſtone, ſhe once more became ſilent.

Confounded and aſtoniſhed at what ſhe ſaw and heard, Charlotte had no power to anſwer, nor ability to enquire for an explanation. She ſat down on the ſteps leading to the altar, and fixing her eyes earneſtly on Madame de Narbonne, remained in that attitude till the Counteſs, reſuming her diſcourſe, thus proceeded—

"When we firſt met, my dear Charlotte, you ſoon diſcovered that ſome ſecret affliction preyed upon my heart, and rendered human exiſtence not merely indifferent, but at times even painful;—ſtill, however, you knew not the depth of the wound that feſtered in this miſerable boſom, and

to

to lay it open muſt now be my buſineſs.—Sole ſurviving branch of my late illuſtrious Houſe—alone and unconnected in the world—when you ſee me ſurrounded with worldly wealth, my diſtreſſes diminiſh in the proſpect, and you probably wonder what I can have to complain of.—Alas! appearances are fallacious, and ſeldom to be depended upon.—Truſt not the illuſive deceivers—the thorn and the roſe grow together;—good and evil are mixed below—but, ah! how unequal ſometimes in their portions!—Mine has been a bitter draught in this world—how bitter, O God! thou alone knoweſt;—thou, who for wiſe purpoſes, haſt preſented the envenomed cup of agonized anguiſh to the parched lip of ſecret Misfortune, canſt alone bear witneſs to my ſufferings.—Yes, the huſband of my youth, my ſole delight in this world—almoſt my only hope in the next—is mouldering beneath this cold, unconſcious fabric!—Alas! when the dreadful theme occurs—when recollection glares on my chilled ſenſes, I am ſtill often forced, by the aid of religion, to drive its image away, leſt frenzy ſhould once more ſeize on intellects no longer able to ſtruggle with accumulating horrors, and reaſon again be——Ah me!—too true!—what variegated wretchedneſs has not this breaking heart groaned under—and ſtill——But

grant

grant me patience, Heaven, I beſeech thee!" cried ſhe, with additional perturbation of manner and accent.

A pauſe enſued;—the Counteſs preſſed her hand upon her forehead, in the attitude of a perſon endeavouring to recollect what was to follow her laſt words; but finding herſelf unequal to the attempt, ſhe haſtily quitted the monument, and retired to a ſmall diſtance behind it.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſtarted from her ſeat to attend her; the Counteſs turned her head as ſhe roſe, and waved her hand in token of refuſal;—Charlotte therefore placed herſelf on the ſteps again, but kept her eyes anxiouſly fixed on the motions of her friend, whom ſhe obſerved walking behind ſome pillars with an irregular and hurried movement; but, at the ſame time, in ſuch a way as calmed her firſt apprehenſions on the ſubject.

Shortly after this, ſhe ſaw her kneel down, apparently in an act of fervent devotion, from whence ſhe concluded her mind had become more compoſed; and flattering herſelf with this idea, ſhe proceeded to inveſtigate more minutely the laſt receptacle of a perſon, who, though unknown to her, was evidently dear beyond expreſſion to the woman ſhe moſt eſteemed on earth—the unhappy Madame de Narbonne!

Between

Between two marble columns lay the figure of a young man, the graceful proportion of whoſe form, and the ſtrong expreſſion of ſenſibility prevalent in his countenance, far ſurpaſſed, in powers of deſign and execution, all ſhe had hitherto remarked in the chapel: it exhibited indications of a more modern date than any of the others, and the correſponding emblems were equally ſtriking and deſcriptive.

Cecilia was there ſeen in a muſing attitude; a tear ſeemed burſting from her eyes, as ſhe contemplated the breathleſs and recumbent object before her, while her late tuneful harp, which appeared to have dropped from her fingers, lay unnoticed and unſtrung on the ground. A fine repreſentation of Friendſhip, bearing the irradiate creſt of a phœnix, and pointing to two hands that claſped a burning heart on one ſide of it, was placed at the feet of the effigy. A pendant veil, raiſed by two hovering ſeraphs, diſplayed a view of the opening heavens, on the roof above; while two others, leſs diſtant, held a vaſe of collected perfumes, which roſe in odoriferous incenſe over the heart that the directing hand of Friendſhip pointed to; two mated turtles fluttered above in ſtone—one was ſtruck by a falcon. Charlotte could ſcarcely believe they were the production of the artiſt's chiſel; but ſhe had no longer leiſure for obſervation. Madame de Narbonne now

approached: her prayers ſeemed to have been anſwered; an air of melancholy compoſure had ſucceeded to the late agitation viſible on her fine countenance, and ſhe returned to her young companion with that calm look of mild reſignation, which the ſources of religion, if properly explored, are ever productive of.

She ſaw the tear of ſenſibility which Charlotte vainly ſtrove to ſuppreſs, and remarked that the ſculptured turtles particularly attracted her notice; the diſcovery, however, paſſed in ſilence, and her humid eyes ſtrayed for ſome time over the tomb, without even attempting to utter a ſyllable. At length—

"Your wonder, my friend," ſaid ſhe, "is natural—human ſkill has been exhauſted on this ſad memento of long loſt happineſs; but the works of ingenuity, wealth, or time are now equally loſt upon me!—a dearer tie attaches my heart to this lonely abode!—Believe me, I find more real enjoyment in one ſolitary hour of penſive reflection ſpent over the grave of a beloved huſband, than all the fallacious charms an illuſive world can poſſibly afford!—Alas! Charlotte—my dear Charlotte! beneath theſe cold, theſe inſenſible figures, ſleeps the man who, living or dead, has marked my fate in indelible colours; and, for upwards of nineteen years,

years, formed almoſt the ſole occupation of my ſecret thoughts!—From him I have never, even in idea, ſtrayed to another;—he has uniformly proved my waking contemplation, and midnight dream.—Nor do I conſider the heavy chains, recently impoſed by the iron hand of oppreſſion, any impediment to ſuch remembrances:—the mind riſes ſuperior to human fetters, and cannot be ſtained by actions in which it has no ſhare—actions merely the reſult of compulſatory meaſures, beyond the power of their victim to ſtruggle againſt.—But my tale is long; ſeat yourſelf on the pedeſtal of this pillar. Here it is I frequently huſh my ſorrows to peace, while imagination penetrates the regions of futurity, and ſoaring above the ſtroke of mortal affliction, joins the dear, the ever-lamented partner of my heart, in a happier world, where no revolutionary ſyſtems can interfere with our tranquillity, nor the ravages of time or chance injure its permanency.

"You are, no doubt, already ſufficiently acquainted with my family, to know that the name of Narbonne is not a production of yeſterday:—our Houſe is indeed one of the moſt ancient in this part of the country. I mention not the circumſtance from any trifling motive of fooliſh vanity; but becauſe ſome of the greateſt misfortunes of my

life have proceeded from a conſciouſneſs of this caſual advantage in the minds of others.

" Nevertheleſs I believe it is generally true, that few people ever deſpiſed theſe ſame advantages who were not themſelves fully ſenſible they could not, with propriety, lay any legal claim to them;—for however adventitious the accidental poſſeſſion of high birth, or hereditary honours, may be made to appear in the eyes of the multitude, we ſtill ſee them, on all occaſions, ſufficiently ready to aſſume an air of conſequential importance, from the diſcovery of any connection with perſons of this deſcription, let their pretenſions be ever ſo remote to ſuch a diſtinction.

" Alas! did their ſufferings originate as mine have done, from being the deſcendant of a long line of illuſtrious anceſtors, the honour would ſoon be deemed a very inadequate compenſation for the anguiſh of a ſubdued ſpirit and a broken heart!

" My father, the laſt Count de Narbonne, was a man of great talents and ſuperior underſtanding; his opinion was ſought for on all matters of conſequence, his ſentiments were applauded, his judgment deciſive, and his advice almoſt implicitly followed. Though nearly poſſeſſed of univerſal knowledge, and familiarly acquainted with all the arts and ſciences, he had never been able to acquire

one

one principal object of the firſt utility, without which all the reſt only ſerve to render the errors, too frequently attendant on extenſive abilities, more conſpicuous and inexcuſable. Self-command was not in my poor father's vocabulary of neceſſary attainments:—violent and unequal in temper, naturally proud and inflexible in diſpoſition, and conſtantly valuing himſelf, in ſpite of his good ſenſe, on the nobility of his birth, and other accidental circumſtances, he was but too apt to overlook qualities in others, which he failed not to prize at a high rate in himſelf.

The deference paid to his judgment on every material occurrence in the neighbourhood, he had long been accuſtomed to conſider as his due; and the idea did not ſerve to leſſen thoſe ſenſations of mental ſuperiority, that rendered him, in time, heedleſs of ſelf-conſtraint, and ſo impatient of the ſmalleſt contradiction, that not only his own family, but even others independent of his power, were often made to ſmart under the imperious influence of ungovernable paſſion, and the characteriſtic haughtineſs that marked his diſpoſition.

In ſome caſes, the equalizing hand of Nature leaves us little in fact to complain of; would we but impartially weigh the great and the ſmall ingredients, alternately intermixed in the human

compoſition, where fortune, or mental advantages are merely in queſtion, it would frequently be found that good and evil are more uniformly diſtributed, and the apparent different lots of mankind, in ſuch inſtances, more uſually on a level, than in general we are willing to allow.

" Thus, while thoſe who were probably inferior to the Count de Narbonne in every other reſpect, knew how to reſtrain their paſſions, and ſubmit with propriety to the rules neceſſarily impoſed for the well-being of ſociety, by which means they became uſeful friends, and amiable acquaintance, were courted, loved, and eſteemed as valuable, though perhaps common characters; he himſelf, with all his wealth, rank, and ſhining abilities, was dreaded as the ſtern interrupter of innocent feſtivity in the domeſtic circle; or the ſevere ſatiriſt of actions irreprehenſible in truth, but guilty in his opinion, ſo far as they reached not his own climax of Utopian perfection.

" But though my father muſt often have ſeen people, whoſe abilities were no recommendation, received, from the innate goodneſs of their hearts, with warmth and cordiality, while the only ſenſations his preſence inſpired were thoſe of humiliation and reſtraint; yet the obſervation ſeldom gave him any material diſturbance, for he well knew

knew that in all affairs of moment, whether of a public or private nature, his advice was too eſſential not to be requeſted, and followed in preference to almoſt every other perſon's in the country.

" My mother, who was naturally of a mild diſpoſition, often ſmarted in ſilence from this turn of mind in her huſband. Two children were the only fruits of her union with the Count, and in theſe ſeemed to be wrapped all her terreſtrial views of comfort or enjoyment. As my brother and I advanced in years, we gradually became more ſenſible of her difficulties, and contributed all in our power to ameliorate the ſeverity of a fate ſo cruel and unmerited.

" But though it was frequently impoſſible to conceal from us the harſhneſs of his words and actions, we were not, nevertheleſs, permitted to fail in any point of duty, or filial reſpect to our father. So far from that being the caſe, this excellent woman took every opportunity of inſtilling the beſt of principles into our tender minds, and enforcing their obſervance with appropriate arguments, calculated to make the ſtrongeſt impreſſion on the heart and memory. Thus taught to think, and conduct ourſelves, the Count de Narbonne was certainly dear as a parent, and we would at any time have ſacrificed our own happineſs, or life,

to have procured an addition of either to him; but yet, in ſpite of thoſe ſentiments, it muſt not be conſidered as wonderful if, even at the identical moment we could have gone any length to pleaſe him, the very look of this auſtere father made us tremble. Indeed the harſh, ſtern, and inflexible reſerve he conſtantly maintained, inſpired ſo great a degree of awe and conſtraint, that we ſeldom found ourſelves tolerably happy, or at eaſe, in his company.

" Pardon my dwelling ſo long on this diſagreeable ſubject; it is one that can never be obliterated from my remembrance, for from it has originated all the ſubſequent miſery of my life.

" A female writer juſtly obſerves, that " when we look round this wide and eventful ſcene of ſorrow and deluſion, how few are there who can thank the Author of their being, while thouſands, and tens of thouſands lament the hour that firſt opened their eyes to the agonies of exiſtence * !"

" Would to Heaven it were in my power to controvert ſo melancholy a deſcription of our earthly pilgrimage;—but mine, alas! has been too thickly ſtrewn with ſorrow, to afford a more conſolatory proſpect.

* Mrs. Robinſon's " Walſingham."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

" ——— Why is remembrance
" Rich with a thouſand pleaſing images
" Of paſt enjoyment, ſince 'tis but to plague me?"

ROWE.

" TIME, a different mode of education, and a change of ſcene, rendered my brother, at length, more indifferent to the parental caprices we were ſubjected to encounter; but on my mind they made too laſting an impreſſion ever to be effaced. Perhaps ſituation and circumſtances were partly anſwerable for this, as I had the irreparable misfortune to loſe my poor mother before I attained the age of fourteen; and, of courſe, became more liable to ſuffer from my father's temper, when expoſed to its fury, without a ſingle mediator or

comforter to ſupport my ſpirits under the repeated trials I was now left ſolely to ſuſtain.

" Although this fatal and ever-lamented event was deeply felt, with all its attendant bitterneſs, I yet was not long totally devoid of all conſolation. The Lady Abbeſs of the neighbouring Convent had been on terms of the moſt intimate friendſhip with my mother for a ſeries of years; I was accuſtomed to viſit her frequently with that dear parent, and even had received a part of my education under her tuition in the cloiſter;—to her care, and occaſional protection, my beloved mother recommended me almoſt with her laſt breath; and to her I have ſince owed many hours of comfort, which, but for the kind offices of ſuch a friend, would probably have been devoted to unavailing regret, and the tortures of fruitleſs recollection.

" Before the concluſion of my fifteenth year, my brother, who was conſiderably older than me, and had been abroad for ſome time, returned home. He had early evinced a predilection for a military life, though againſt the wiſhes of his family, of whom he was the only remaining male branch; and ſome altercation had paſſed between his father and him on the ſubject, who found, for once, that his ſon was not deficient in perſeverance, more than himſelf, when a favourite point was to carry.

At

At length it was compromiſed, by agreeing that my brother ſhould firſt make a campaign or two in foreign ſervice, before he actually fixed upon a continuance in that line. The young Count conſented to this propoſition, and his conduct crowned him with glory. The *eclat* that his actions obtained him, reached Narbonne before his arrival; my father's pride was gratified by the applauſe beſtowed on his ſon, and vanity taking the ſemblance of natural affection, procured him a more flattering reception than parental feelings had hitherto condeſcended to beſtow. The youthful hero met with a pleaſing welcome, beyond his hopes, in one quarter—in another, merely equal to them; for the warmth of his ſiſter's heart proved only the counterpart of his own.

"My brother was accompanied by a young gentleman, whoſe face and appearance would have proved a ſufficient recommendation without any other introduction; judge then what it muſt have been, when we afterwards learned that the elegant and prepoſſeſſing ſtranger had been the means, under Providence, of ſaving his companion's life, at the imminent riſk of his own, when the former was ſinking beneath an unexpected attack from a ſuperior number of the enemy, on the field of battle!

" The long abſence of his ſon, and the favourable accounts, received from all quarters, of his behaviour and military fame, joined to the fine figure, ſpirited temper, and engaging manners of this only heir to his name and immenſe riches, wrought ſo wonderful a change in my father's diſpoſition, that peace and good-humour ſeemed, for the firſt time, to have taken up their reſidence at the Caſtle of Narbonne. The effect this had upon my mind is not to be deſcribed: I once more fancied the days of maternal affection returned, when the Count honoured me with any mark of particular attention, however trifling in its nature it might have appeared to thoſe accuſtomed to the happier enjoyments of filial tenderneſs. In the gratitude experienced on theſe occaſions, I forgot all he had formerly made me ſuffer; and, with the thoughtleſſneſs natural at my time of life, fondly concluded, what I wiſhed had taken place, that a permanent, not a temporary alteration, had at length been effected in my father's mind and conduct. He ſeemed pleaſed to exhibit his ſon's merit and qualifications to the neighbouring families; and ſeldom a day now elapſed without being diſtinguiſhed by ſome party of ſocial feſtivity, either at home or abroad.

" The amiable ſtranger was by no means the leaſt conſpicuous figure on thoſe occaſions. The

counterpart of my brother in every attractive and mental accompliſhment, he yet ſurpaſſed him in elegance of form, expreſſion of countenance, and inſinuating manners; his temper too, though equally ſpirited, had the fire of youth more happily chaſtened by a proper mixture of gentleneſs, which rendered his character inexpreſſibly intereſting.—Indeed my father ſhewed him ſo much attention, that a by-ſtander would hardly have been able to diſtinguiſh which of the two was deareſt to him.

" I cannot, my dear Charlotte, by any deſcription of mine, convey an adequate idea of the Chevalier's merit and perſonal qualifications. The Engliſh Montague ſtrikes me with a faint reſemblance of him, or at leaſt comes nearer it than any one elſe I know; this at firſt ſurpriſed me, but his ſtory afterwards explained the enigma, and I was enabled to account for it, by learning from Mr. Haſtings his connection with the family of the other.

" Once, indeed, I met with a much ſtronger likeneſs, but the perſon was a ſtranger to me;—he ſeemed to bear the living form, and even poſſeſs the voice of this dear youth, at the ſame early period of life. I know not, nor could I ever diſcover who he was, nor from whence an appearance proceeded,

proceeded, that almoſt drove me again to a ſtate of frenzy. Perhaps it was merely an illuſive phantom of the brain that preſented itſelf to my imagination;—and yet I can ſcarcely help thinking it a reality. You recollect what I allude to, at the period of the maſked-ball, and the illneſs that confined me to my chamber, in conſequence of that interview. The *tout enſemble* of him whom I then encountered, on my return from the rock, conjured up a thouſand pleaſing and painful remembrances, and forced me almoſt to ſuppoſe that the grave had rendered up its inhabitant, and clothed him again with a corporeal form!

"Alas! the viſion fled, like all thoſe tranſient gleams of happineſs this world has hitherto afforded me!—In vain I employed every means for further intelligence—none could be procured; and Deſpair, led by Diſappointment, once more took place of Fortitude, whoſe baſeleſs fabrick I had long and fruitleſſly been endeavouring to rear.

"Reflection, however, in time brought me to a more proper ſtate of mind, and again produced a degree of reſignation to inevitable evils."

Here the Counteſs pauſed, and wiped away a tear that ſtood ready to burſt its boundary.

That ſhe alluded to the interview with St. Julian in the avenue was clear; but that this unaccountable

able reſemblance ſhould have left ſo ſtrong an impreſſion on her mind, appeared ſtrange to Mademoiſelle de Cordet; and ſhe almoſt perſuaded herſelf ſome hidden myſtery, ſome event of importance was yet to be brought to light, in which this young man would bear a conſpicuous part. A coincidence of circumſtances recalled to her memory that his fate was alſo connected with concealment; for he had evidently avoided every particular hint which implicated the ſmalleſt deſire to attain any knowledge of his birth or family. This conduct, when compared with what ſhe had already learned from Madame de Narbonne, would have given riſe to unpleaſant ſuſpicions with many people; the different ages of both was likewiſe favourable to conjecture; but the Counteſs had been ſo long her own miſtreſs that, had a private marriage with her brother's friend ever taken place, ſhe had certainly, for years, been at liberty to declare it, and preſent the fruits of ſuch an union to the world in his proper character.

A matrimonial connection, therefore, appeared out of the queſtion; and the uniform character and principle of Madame de Narbonne rendered every other idea no leſs ſo, in the opinion of Charlotte.

As for the huſband impoſed upon her by parental authority, he, it was known, went almoſt from the

the altar of Hymen to the tomb; or, at leaſt, was confined to his bed a very few hours after conferring the nominal title of wife on his reluctant couſin. No offspring could therefore proceed from this union; nor would ſhe, probably, have been ſo deeply intereſted on that account, had ſuch, in this inſtance, been the caſe.

All appeared inexplicable, whichever way it was conſidered; but though anxious to obtain ſome information on the ſubject, Charlotte was too much accuſtomed to ſoar above the little curioſity incident to common minds, not to reſtrain her impatience for an explanation, till the narrative of the Counteſs produced it in its proper place; it was, conſequently, an agreeable interruption to her preſent train of thought when the voice of Madame de Narbonne once more reached her ear.

"To the crowded circles of youth, beauty, and elegance, now ſo frequently met with, either in the Caſtle or elſewhere, my brother's friend ſoon appeared equally and uniformly indifferent.

"He was often rallied on every freſh proof of inſenſibility; and I began, at length, to feel that I was myſelf more intereſted in the event than I had once been willing to allow. My young heart had received a deep and indelible impreſſion before I was aware of its ſituation, or had even thought of

inveſtigating

inveſtigating the ſentiments unconſciouſly entertained in his favour.

" The diſcovery afforded no ſatisfaction when it was made; on the contrary, it was attended with the apprehended diſappointment of hopes I knew not till then had been indulged; and I wept, in private, over the weakneſs that firſt led me to give way to ſuch deluſions, without being, at times, convinced I merited ſelf-reproach for the admiſſion of unintentional error, when the cauſe that produced it was viewed with impartiality.

" Hurt at my own inſignificance, in not being able to obtain an intereſt in the heart of St. Hypolite, I began to ſuſpect that the ſecret prepoſſeſſion entertained for him, had, ſomehow or other, from the innocent, unreſerved nature of my conduct, been diſcloſed; and, inſtead of affording pleaſure, had only inſpired ſenſations of contempt, for a conqueſt perhaps undeſired, or at beſt ſo very eaſily attained. The penſive, dejected air with which I often caught him obſerving me, impreſſed this apprehenſion ſtill more forcibly, from the idea that it originated in pity and compaſſion for my unguarded folly.

" Female dignity immediately took the alarm; I reſolved to be more watchful of my behaviour in future, and by paying a forced attention to the young

young Baron de Verney, who was known to view me with partiality, endeavour to convince St. Hypolite that I was not ſo eaſily won as he probably imagined.

" Unaccuſtomed to ſee me ſo unreſerved with any other perſon, himſelf and my brother excepted, as I had hitherto kept all thoſe who pretended to come under the denomination of admirers at a cold and uniform diſtance; this change of conduct ſeemed to ſtrike the Chevalier with inconceivable amazement, and, for once, evidently rouſed him from his former ſtate of torpid indifference.

" For ſome time, however, he appeared to doubt the reality of what he ſaw; but I did not deſign that ſhould long be the caſe, and therefore acted in ſuch a manner, though perfectly conſiſtent with the ſtricteſt dictates of modeſty, as ſoon left no room for any other conſtruction, than that the Baron had ſucceeded in gaining my favourable opinion.

" Deception, on all occaſions, is a dangerous weapon to ſport with; but when particularly employed to ſecure the fleeting form of earthly happineſs, it finally proves, in moſt caſes, its grave.—Moral good can never ſpring from intentional evil; and it is only in the depravity of the human heart that we muſt look for the ſource from whence ſuch an idea could firſt originate. Repentance comes,

comes, ſooner or later, in its train; and then it little avails us that we choſe to wander in the crooked path of deceit, as the ſureſt means of reaching the ſtraighter one of rectitude. Thoſe who incautiouſly uſe ſuch means for the attainment of their purpoſe, will find it is like the ſerpent in the graſs, who ſtings the hand before he can be diſentangled from his hold; or, at beſt, leaves a portion of venom behind never to be totally eradicated.

"I now obſerved, with fallacious, but inexpreſſible tranſport, that my contrivance had not proved ineffectual. St. Hypolite's eyes were conſtantly rivetted on my motions while his ſuppoſed rival was preſent; and I often had great difficulty to bear their ſcrutinizing luſtre without betraying myſelf. But things were now drawing faſt towards a criſis.

"De Verney, flattered by my ſeeming preference, never once ſuſpected the cauſe of the manœuvre I had put in practice, leſs in fact to deceive him, than to ſuit my own views. And, indeed, ſo young and fooliſh was I then myſelf, that any idea of the natural conſequence of ſuch a conduct, never once interfered to check the exultation of ſucceſs which had attended the ſcheme I ſo eagerly purſued, till too late to prevent its effects.

"Secure,

" Secure, as he imagined, of my approbation, the Baron de Verney at length entreated permiſſion to mention his wiſhes to my father.

" Confounded at a requeſt that had never once entered into my chapter of probabilities, I was too much aſtoniſhed to return an immediate anſwer; and ſilence on ſuch occaſions being taken for a tacit conſent, he was hurrying from me, with all the ardour of youthful impatience, to accompliſh his purpoſe, when, almoſt breathleſs with agitation, I caught hold of his arm, and entreated to be heard before he left me.—I pauſed, and he regarded me with a look of ſurpriſe and expectation at what was to follow.

" Summoning all my little ſtock of fortitude, I proceeded, as well as I was able, to declare my contrition for having led him into a miſtake, which could not now be too ſoon rectified.—Marriage, I ſaid, had never yet been conſidered by me in the ſerious light he ſeemed to view it; that I was ſtill too young to think of changing my ſituation in life; and, in ſhort, that from a variety of circumſtances, unneceſſary to enumerate, I was poſitively determined, however greatly flattered by the honour of his partial opinion, to put a decided negative on every intention to addreſs my father on ſuch a ſubject.

" The

« The Baron, as young men are ſometimes apt to do, ſaw his own perfections too much through the falſe medium of vanity, to give my ſincerity the credit it certainly merited. He perſiſted in his deſign; and all I could obtain, either by threats or entreaties, was a temporary ſuſpenſion of his purpoſe, till he could prevail upon me to be more acquieſcent in the ſcheme he was reſolved to purſue.

« Such were the effects of deception, and ſuch the bleſſed condition to which I had now reduced myſelf, by adopting its practice as the line of my conduct.

« After De Verney's departure, I walked about the room, in an agitation of mind too acute for deſcription. I had conducted myſelf to the brink of a precipice, from whence I knew not how to recede with honour;—and to advance—to be the means of deſtroying every chance of my own happineſs hereafter—was agony in the extreme, only to think of!

« In this miſerable ſtate of ſelf-accuſation, my eye caught a view of St. Hypolite from the window. He was croſſing the park, arm in arm, with my brother, and they ſeemed engaged in earneſt converſation. I fancied he had never before

before appeared to ſo much advantage; and after regarding him for a few moments, I retired to my own chamber, in a frame of mind only to be envied by a criminal going to the ſcaffold.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

" Oh Love! within thoſe golden vales,
" Thoſe genial airs where thou waſt born,
" Where Nature, liſtening to thy tales,
" Leans on the roſy breaſt of Morn;
" Where the ſweet ſmiles the Graces dwell,
" And tender ſighs the heart emmove,
" In ſilent eloquence to tell
" Thy tale, Oh ſoul-ſubduing Love!"

LANGHORNE.

" ST. HYPOLITE, from cautiouſly watching my behaviour with looks of anxious ſolicitude, and inadvertently betraying the deep intereſt he took in all my actions, had, for ſeveral days paſt, returned again to his former mode of conduct, and treated me

me once more in the uſual ſtyle of polite indifference.

" That air of penſive melancholy, which vanity had ſo lately appropriated to my own account, no longer now overſpread his expreſſive countenance. I dreaded the fallacious nature of partial obſervation, and concluded ſome caſual diſtreſs, unconnected with me or my proſpects, had alone produced that emotion, of which I hitherto imagined myſelf the ſource.

" The climax of misfortune had not yet, however, reached its height; the preſent agitation of my ſpirits was to receive an additional increaſe on this fatal day, by learning that the Chevalier's departure from Narbonne was determined upon, in ſpite of all my father's and brother's entreaties to the contrary.

" The latter, who never liked De Verney, from his firſt arrival at the Caſtle, had often hinted his diſapprobation of my conduct reſpecting him; and even pretty plainly inſinuated that it would, one time or other, be its own puniſhment.

" Ah! little did he then think how prophetic—how dreadfully prophetic his words afterwards proved!—But my brother had ſeen more of the world than me; and while he remarked the diſſimilarity of character that prevailed between the young

young Baron and myſelf, he alſo knew how to appreciate the high value which a man of my father's diſpoſition would place on the advantages of birth and fortune, ſo eminently poſſeſſed by De Verney, not to be convinced that ſo brilliant an eſtabliſhment would be accepted without heſitation, and any reluctance, on my ſide, little regarded.

" With an aching heart, doubly oppreſſed by the unforeſeen and ill-ſtarred occurrences of the day, I returned an evaſive anſwer to a meſſage from Narbonne, requeſting a few minutes' converſation with me, which I conceived might probably be on ſomething relative to De Verney's propoſals—a theme I wiſhed for ever to diſcard from my remembrance, and was therefore, at that period, but ill-calculated to bear the ſeverity of his animadverſions, on a line of conduct now ſufficiently reprobated, and painful to my mind, from the ſelf-accuſation and conſequences of which it had been productive.

" I remained in my chamber under the pretence, indeed it was more than pretence, of indiſpoſition, till the evening was fairly ſet in, and then ſeizing the firſt favourable opportunity for the execution of my deſign, I ſtole out alone, and directed my ſteps to the Convent; where, from the tender friendſhip and maternal advice of the Lady Abbeſs,

I hoped to derive thoſe advantages, and that compoſure of mind her ſuperior underſtanding had often afforded me on many diſtreſſing occaſions.

" The evening was mild, but the moon had not yet appeared, and the aſpect of the ſky was ſullen and cloudy; it ſeemed in ſympathy with my own reflections, and I walked on, with my eyes fixed on the ground, without paying attention to any other exterior object.

" Before I had proceeded half way, and juſt as I entered the grove on the other ſide of the ſerpentine avenue, a deep ſigh, at no great diſtance, ſtruck my ear. Alarmed at my ſolitary ſituation, I ſuddenly ſtopped, uncertain what courſe to purſue, and ſcarcely daring to look around me, leſt ſomething terrific ſhould appear. A bitter ſucceſſion of misfortunes had not, at that early period, ſufficiently ſeared my heart againſt the apprehenſion of ſupernatural agents, or rendered it callous, as now, to perſonal terror; my ſpirits were likewiſe unuſually weakened at the time, from the train of thought I had lately indulged, and, unable to advance or retreat, I ſtood in fearful expectation of what was to follow.

" Not, however, perceiving any juſt cauſe for fear, nor again hearing a repetition of what at firſt occaſioned it, I at length collected fortitude to continue

tinue my walk; but had not gone many ſteps from the ſpot, before the ſame ſound, and a ruſtling kind of noiſe in the thickeſt part of the grove, once more attracted my notice, and inſtinctively I turned my head to the quarter from whence it proceeded.

"A ſolitary being, like myſelf, now emerged from the trees; but ſo totally was he engroſſed by his own reflections, that I ſeemed to be in little danger of obſervation.

"Mine, however, was too much awakened by the firſt glance, to prove equally abſent on the occaſion; and before another minute elapſed, my ſuſpicion was converted into reality. The late ſubject of my apprehenſion, and the conſtant one of my thoughts, the identical Chevalier St. Hypolite, with folded arms, and his eyes rivetted on the path he was treading, was almoſt now at my ſide!

"An involuntary exclamation of unguarded pleaſure and ſurpriſe, which eſcaped me on this diſcovery, no leſs aſtoniſhed the object of it: he ſtarted, raiſed his eyes from the ground, and ſtood for a moment in the attitude of irreſolution.

"At length bowing as he approached nearer, with a graceful but dejected air, he accoſted me in accents expreſſive of wonder at a meeting ſo

unexpected, after being given to underſtand that I was confined to my apartment by indiſpoſition.

" To this I gave no direct anſwer; but faltered out ſomething, in much confuſion, about the effects of freſh air, and I know not what, for agitation and ſurpriſe quite overwhelmed my ſpirits.

" A ſhort ſilence now enſued on both ſides.—Conſcious of the awkward ſituation I found myſelf in, and ſolicitous to learn the truth of his intended departure, I ventured at laſt to break it, by requeſting to know if, as I had been informed, he was really determined to leave us in a few days.

' My journey begins, Mademoiſelle, to-morrow,' he replied. ' I quit Narbonne early in the morning; but, if you have any commands to honour me with for Paris, I will wait your time with pleaſure.'

' And do you then abſolutely go to-morrow, Chevalier?—Good God! will you leave us on ſo ſhort a warning?'

" The emotion with which theſe few words were uttered, viſibly ſtruck him; he appeared infinitely ſurpriſed, and gazed with earneſtneſs on my face as I ſpoke. His whole frame ſeemed agitated, but he inſtantly recollected himſelf, and addreſſed me in a ſoft voice to the following effect:—

' Were

'Were my preſence either wiſhed for, or of the ſmalleſt conſequence to thoſe on whom my principal hopes of happineſs depend, I ſhould not certainly think of taking an eternal farewel of ſcenes, where I have experienced more pleaſure and pain than are felt by the generality of mankind. But the illuſions of fancy no longer exiſt!—the former is fled for ever; and the latter ſettled in the laſting gloom of mental anguiſh, oppreſſive and deep!—It is needleſs, however, to complain of irremediable evils.—I go then from hence!—The imperious neceſſity of circumſtances demands my abſence!—Perhaps I may not again, this evening, have ſo favourable an opportunity of bidding you adieu; I feel the preſent indulgence is too dangerous to be prolonged—let me then haſten to ſhorten its horrors!—Farewel, deareſt Adelaide!' cried he, in a voice ſcarcely articulate; 'may you never know the bitter pang of diſappointed hope, or the ſecret anguiſh that corrodes the boſom of ill-requited attachment!—May your union with the happy De Verney anſwer your moſt ſanguine expectations!—and——But adieu, Mademoiſelle!—Adieu for ever!'

"He quitted my hand, and was turning from me in an agony of mind, eaſier to be conceived than deſcribed, when ſuddenly catching hold of his arm—

'Stay, Chevalier,' I exclaimed; 'if you will go, leave me not at leaſt under a miſtake.—My union with De Verney!—what do you mean?'

'My meaning, Madam,' returned he, with a mournful and ſtill more dejected air, 'cannot, I think, be very difficult to comprehend;—I allude to thoſe engagements ſo ſoon to take place between you and the Baron.'

'You talk in enigmas,' I replied, attempting to force a ſmile; 'ſurely you have not diſpoſed of me without my own conſent?'

'Your conſent,' anſwered St. Hypolite, gravely, 'was certainly implicated in the information I have received on the ſubject.—My heart, Mademoiſelle, is but ill calculated at preſent to bear any jeſting with its feelings.'

'Upon my honour, Chevalier, I am ſeriouſly in earneſt, and ſolemnly aſſure you I do not yet comprehend what I am to underſtand from your expreſſions.'

'Heavens and earth!' cried he, with an exertion which ſeemed to be produced by deſpair, 'are you not upon the very verge of marriage with Baron de Verney?—Did not he himſelf, this morning, acquaint your brother that your conſent was obtained; and requeſted my friend to uſe his influence, in order to procure an early day, which,

he

he doubted not, you would grant to their united ſolicitations, as your objections appeared ſuch as might be overruled, he believed, without much difficulty?'

'Contemptible wretch!' cried I, with a warmth I could no longer ſuppreſs; 'how dares he propagate ſo deliberate a falſehood!—He knows the contrary—he knows——but it ſignifies not entering farther on ſo deteſted a ſubject.'

'Oh yes, by Heaven, but it does!' exclaimed St. Hypolite, with ſo ſudden a change of voice and countenance as perfectly aſtoniſhed me; 'repeat the delightful ſentence over again!—Tell me once more that it is really a falſehood, and then add to the bleſſing by allowing me to hope I am not equally diſagreeable to you!'

"He had ſeized my hand as he ſpoke—it trembled in his.—What ſhall I ſay, my dear Charlotte? The agitation of my ſpirits on the accompliſhment of ſo deſirable an explanation—the ſurpriſe with which it had come upon me—the favourable and unlooked-for opportunity which preſented itſelf ſo critically—all conſpired to anſwer his wiſhes, and betray the ſituation of my heart. In ſhort, a mutual confeſſion of attachment enſued; and the conſequent eclairciſſement that ſucceeded, ſoon ſet our minds at eaſe with each other.

"Oh happy moments! why are ye, even now, recollected with ſo great a mixture of pleaſure and regret?—On proſpects for ever buried in the gulph of paſt time, why dwells the memory thus perverſely bent on ſelf-inflicted miſery?—Ah! why indeed, unleſs it be to fly from genuine and ever preſent anguiſh, to ſcenes, temporary perhaps, but pure, and unembittered by affliction, during the period of their ſhort-lived exiſtence.—Few and fleeting were the moments of happineſs allotted me!—long and wretched the years of ſorrow and ſuffering that ſucceeded them!—Fortunately the rugged path of life is concealed from our knowledge, and the ſecrets of futurity excluded from inſpection, otherwiſe the dreadful certainty of evils to come would load our weary ſteps with double weight, and render our pre-ordained journey to the grave, ſtill more oppreſſive to ſuſtain.—But all is directed by a wiſe and overruling Providence, and therefore that all muſt be for the beſt!"

Madame de Narbonne had riſen from her ſeat at the beginning of this apoſtrophe to happier days, and on the tomb of her huſband, as ſhe leaned upon the cold marble, poured forth the effuſions of memory, that now preſſed upon her half-broken heart with renovated energy. Like Banquo's ghoſt *,

* Tragedy of Macbeth.

thoſe

thoſe days roſe to remembrance in ſad ſucceſſion. She ſeemed to view their viſionary forms in idea, as her eyes gazed on the ſculptured features of St. Hypolite. A mild look of reſignation was then caſt upwards to heaven, after which ſhe ſlowly left the monument, and again reſumed her former ſituation.

"When the firſt emotion, produced by this mutual diſcovery, had a little ſubſided," continued Madame de Narbonne, "the Chevalier St. Hypolite informed me that ſoon after his arrival at the Caſtle, an attachment for me had taken place; but from private reaſons of a powerful and deciſive nature, only known to himſelf and my brother, he had hitherto been withheld from explaining his ſentiments; becauſe he apprehended a negative would be put upon his pretenſions by my father, were he to apply for his ſanction, in the event of previouſly obtaining my permiſſion for that purpoſe. He generouſly added, that a fatal certainty of this melancholy circumſtance had reſtrained him from endeavouring to obtain more than my eſteem, leſt the purchaſe might hereafter be made at the expence of parental affection, and conſequently my own peace of mind become the neceſſary ſacrifice to ſuch a procedure; that the pain this idea had frequently inflicted, was ſupported with tolerable

patience, from a conſcious rectitude of intention, and a knowledge of its propriety (at leaſt while he ſaw me indifferent to the admiration I daily excited in others); but the firſt moment I appeared to liſten with pleaſure to De Verney, was the laſt of his tranquillity. The concealed, but conſtant attention he paid to all my actions, convinced him I was not averſe to the Baron's addreſſes;—the obſervation, ſituated as he then was, ought not to have hurt him; but who was ever philoſophical enough to govern, uniformly, all the ſenſations of a heart in love?—He pretended to no ſuch ſtoiciſm, and confeſſed that the obſervations he then made, ſtabbed him to the ſoul; but after a long ſtruggle between honour and inclination, the former at length conquered, and he reſolved to bury his own wiſhes in oblivion, rather than interrupt what he ſuppoſed my approaching happineſs, or increaſe his rival's triumph by a fruitleſs diſcloſure of his own ſufferings.

"In conſequence of this determination, he had endeavoured to reſume his former appearance of indifference; but ſtill, weakly unable to tear himſelf from Narbonne, he continued to linger near me, without being ſenſible of his motive for ſo ill-judged an indulgence, or receiving any other advantage

vantage from the prolongation of his viſit, than an additional portion of mortification and miſery.

" At length, finding it no longer poſſible to conceal an aching heart under a ſmiling countenance, he had come to the reſolution of trying what a change of ſcene would produce. The putting this ſcheme in execution was, however, delayed from day to day, till De Verney's intelligence brought matters to a final criſis; and his departure from the Caſtle, on the following morning, would have been the conſequence, had not this accidental interview ſo unexpectedly prevented the gloomy effects of deſpair.

" St. Hypolite further added, that my brother, who, from his partiality to him, had ever been decidedly averſe to De Verney's pretenſions, inſiſted upon diſcourſing with me on my determination in his favour; but knowing me too well to ſuppoſe I had given the Baron encouragement to proceed ſo far, without feeling that my future peace and happineſs were intereſted in the formation of a more intimate connection, he had ſtrenuouſly oppoſed this friendly deſign, and reſolved, if he could not ſoften the rigour of his fate, to ſhew at leaſt, by his conduct, that he merited a better one.

' Had I not been very poſitive on this ſubject,' ſaid St. Hypolite, ' your brother, in ſpite of your

refuſal to ſee him, would have purſued his intention. Indeed that very refuſal was confirmation ſtrong as holy writ to me; for I doubted not but you already knew my friend's diſlike to De Verney, and thence concluded, that having ſettled every thing in your own mind relative to this engagement, you were henceforth determined to hear nothing repugnant to it. Beſides, our knowledge of the Count de Narbonne's approbation of the meaſure, was ſuch as excluded every chance of obtaining his ſanction in favour of another perſon, had I even been ſo circumſtanced as to have requeſted it with any proſpect of ſucceſs.—But, alas! that was not the caſe—a harſh, unrelenting negative was all I had to expect from him!'

"As St. Hypolite concluded the laſt ſentence, the gloom that had frequently of late overſpread his features, again took poſſeſſion of them; he was once more buried in thought, and often ſighed deeply.

"Alas! when misfortune, however diſtant, hangs heavily over its devoted victim, the heart feels at times a prophetic oppreſſion, which intrudes itſelf in the midſt of our happieſt moments, checks the tranſient enjoyment of earthly felicity, haunts the mind with gloomy preſages of future woe, and unaccountably impreſſes images of calamity, where

thoſe of ſmiling pleaſure were moſt eager to remain.

" Ah me! how many of thoſe ſad forebodings have ended in dreadful reality!—how many of them, even in the gayer hours of ſhort-lived proſperity, have thrown a temporary damp over the preſent moment, and clouded what was to come, in the dark ſhade of ſorrow and diſappointment!

" Thoſe, however, who partly weave their own fate, have no juſt title to complain, if the materials form a compoſition different from their expectations. He who built his houſe on a ſandy foundation, could not ſuppoſe it would be a permanent ſtructure, and when it therefore fell upon his head, had no right to look for compaſſion from his wiſer neighbour; who, fixing his habitation on a rock, experienced not the " pelting of the pitileſs ſtorm," nor was cruſhed to the earth by errors of his own creation.

" Where we deliberately purſue the wrong path, our perverſe wanderings muſt reſt upon ourſelves, and admit not of palliation; but the effects of unintentional miſconduct have certainly a claim to more indulgence, and, from one or other of theſe circumſtances, the misfortunes of life generally proceed. To ourſelves it is of conſequence from which originate the evils that frequently weigh heavy upon

us hereafter; but, in the eyes of the world, it proves a matter of ſmall import, whether error flowed from deſign or miſtake; they are humanely confounded together—diſcrimination is ſet aſide, and ſucceſs or diſappointment becomes the only criterion by which the maſs of mankind form their judgments of right and wrong, in the conduct of their fellow-creatures.

"I had no pretence, however, to deprecate their mercy; and, what was ſtill worſe, no refuge againſt the accuſations of conſcience, which inceſſantly reproached me with the practice of intentional duplicity. I had made uſe of deceit to lead others aſtray;—that deceit had now recoiled on myſelf, and I was henceforth taught to remember, that where the moral principles of truth and rectitude are early implanted, every deviation from them, however temporary or trifling, muſt uniformly be attended with bitter remorſe and ſelf-condemnation of heart.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

" Dull is the privilege of living free,
" Our hearts were never form'd for liberty;
" Some beauteous image, well-imprinted there,
" Can beſt defend them from conſuming care."

LYTTLETON.

" WHILE St. Hypolite dwelt energetically on the ſubject that ſeemed moſt to intereſt his feelings, I could not help wiſhing to know the hidden cauſe which thus appeared to repreſs their ardour, and veil in ſhades of dejection the expreſſion of pleaſure that ſo lately beamed on his fine countenance.—The myſterious impediment to which he alluded, was certainly of a formidable nature, ſince it could be productive of melancholy ſenſations in the very midſt

midſt of new-born felicity; my curioſity could not therefore be conſidered as ſtrange on the occaſion, but I dared not hazard its gratification at the expence of the conſtructions it would admit of.—Female delicacy of courſe prevented my enquiries; for I feared leſt any apparent anxiety to obtain this wiſhed-for information, might evince an indirect deſire for bringing matters to a ſpeedy concluſion. Inclination and propriety were thus for ſome time at variance; but my brother's unforeſeen approach ſoon turned the balance in favour of the latter, and put an end to all irreſolution at this period.

" Narbonne came in ſearch of his friend, little expecting to find him in ſuch company. Time had glided away ſo imperceptibly, that we thought not of its lapſe till recalled to recollection by his appearance;—our aſtoniſhment, of courſe, was extreme to diſcover the length of the interview which had taken place; but it exceeded not that expreſſed by the dear brother who now joined us, nor the joy he afterwards diſplayed, on learning the reſult of our conference.

" The Chevalier's departure was now no longer thought of; but, as we underſtood my father had been enquiring for him, it was judged prudent to ſeparate for the preſent, after appointing the enſuing evening

evening for another interview, at which my brother was to make one of the number.

" By the event that had juſt occurred, my viſit to the Convent was rendered unneceſſary at this juncture. The gentlemen left me as I entered the outer gate; they returned again to the foreſt, and I retired to my own apartment in a very different frame of mind from that in which I had departed a few hours before.

" I muſt once more, my dear friend, requeſt your indulgence for dwelling perhaps too minutely on ſuch topics;—pardon me, I beſeech you, for doing ſo!—The mind that has long been haraſſed with affliction, recurs with pleaſure to the recollection of happier days, and feels a temporary, though melancholy relief, while employed in retracing the ſmiling ſcenes of early youth, where forward hope, piercing into futurity, views, in its extended proſpect, a thouſand baſeleſs fabricks of felicity reared by the illuſive, but faſcinating hand of Imagination.

" Alas! carry the eye from thence into the regions of human probability, and what objects then reall occur!—Diſappointment and Misfortune, with all their attendant train of ſorrows, quickly efface the dazzling picture, and leave nothing behind for preſent contemplation but a barren canvas,

deſpoiled

deſpoiled of all its former gay figures, whoſe outlines we vainly endeavour to purſue, and comparing the glowing colours of the paſt with the dark and dreary ſhades that remain, turn from the gloomy inveſtigation with an aching heart, more deeply wounded from a conſciouſneſs of having increaſed the deſolate ſcene before us, by the fallacious and ill-judged indulgence of chimerical ſchemes, and the unreſtrained warmth of youthful expectation.

"It is needleſs, I preſume, to remark, that my reſt was undiſturbed, and my ſleep more refreſhing on the ſucceeding night, than any I had experienced for ſome time. A ſatisfied and tranquil mind has powerful effects on the corporeal frame, and the looks of the now happy trio bore evidence to the truth of this obſervation.

"My father was not long in noticing the change, particularly in St. Hypolite; and ſmiling, ſaid he flattered himſelf the promiſe he had given the preceding evening of lengthening his viſit, had not been made with much reluctance, ſince it left no marks of regret diſcoverable behind it.

"The Chevalier bowed, and returned a ſuitable reply; but I thought a glance of his eye, which I caſually caught, indicated an embarraſſment I could not comprehend the meaning of; I even fancied he ſeemed fearful of ſome ſubject being renewed, on which

which they had recently converſed; and my brother, aiding his feelings, ſeized the firſt opportunity to retire without creating room for ſuſpicion, and immediately after ſent in a meſſage requeſting his friend to join him in the library.

" I felt an oppreſſive ſickneſs overwhelming my heart; but not daring to follow their example, was forced to remain with my father in all the anxiety of ſuſpenſe. I knew not how to account for the obſervations I had made, and the firſt idea that occurred was the ſubject of our laſt night's converſation;—a ſecond thought, however, convinced me that could have nothing to do with the preſent myſtery; for, had my father been applied to on the topic, and given a refuſal, he would not have treated the Chevalier with his uſual partial kindneſs; and, on the other ſide, if St. Hypolite ſhould have met with a favourable reception, ſuppoſing a propoſal in the caſe, his looks and manner would certainly have been very different from the appearance they had recently aſſumed.

" From this labyrinth of conjecture I was ſoon, however, relieved by my father.

' I am happy,' ſaid he, ' Adelaide, that we have been fortunate enough to prevail on the Chevalier to lengthen his abode with us; he is the moſt amiable young man I ever knew. But, independent

of

of perſonal merit, we owe him infinite obligations for the life of your brother; theſe I ſhould be gratified to have any probable means of returning, that I might evince the ſtrength of my gratitude for preſerving, at the riſk of his own, an exiſtence ſo dear to us. Can you inform me of any circumſtance in which my intereſt could be ſerviceable to him?—I have often ſounded him on this head; but he evades every attempt that leads to ſuch topics with a perſeverance, and even ſenſibility, perfectly incomprehenſible.—Have you, child, ever heard him mention his family or connections?—Your brother is equally myſterious on thoſe occaſions. I can eaſily ſuppoſe, however, that his ſituation and rank are not ſuitable to his merit, otherwiſe the enquiry would appear leſs embarraſſing. It was but laſt night, when diſcourſing on the ſubject of his departure, that I aſked if his impatience to be gone, proceeded from any commands recently received from his father; and another evaſive anſwer was all the return I met with, which left me no wiſer than when I began.—If his birth is really ſo inferior as to render him aſhamed of it, other means ought to be thought of for repaying our debt, than the continuance of an intimacy on ſo equal a footing as your brother has hitherto maintained with him.'

" Such

« Such were my father's ideas of conſequence annexed to hereditary honours and high birth, that perſonal worth and every mental quality were only eſtimated, in his opinion, by the relative poſition they held to the former; or valued according to the ſervice they were capable of rendering what he ſtyled their ſuperiors in rank, and the pride of anceſtry. The latter part of his ſpeech, I could not help remarking, ſavoured too much of his former mode of thinking; and convinced me the late change in his manner was rather produced by exiſting circumſtances, than the reſult of a fundamental alteration of ſentiment.

« I ſcarcely knew how to anſwer the queſtion the Count had thus addreſſed to me, before he reiterated his demand, by enquiring if I had made any diſcovery of the Chevalier's ſituation in life?

« A low and hardly articulate negative was all I had in my power to give.—Alas! what cruel images did not my father's words conjure up to view! Too ſurely ſome fatal tale remained to be told. The tenor even of St. Hypolite's own diſcourſe left this ſad truth inconteſtible; and concurrent incidents all ſerved to corroborate the fact.

« A

" A few days after the Chevalier's firſt arrival at the Caſtle, he left us for upwards of a fortnight, under pretence of indiſpenſible buſineſs that required his preſence elſewhere; but his return, at the expiration of that period, was the only condition on which my father would agree to his departure. My brother then met him at Paris, and accompanied him back to Narbonne; but no particular cauſe was aſſigned for this abſence, neither had any thing tranſpired concerning it. Every alluſion to his parents, or family reſidence, was cautiouſly and with equal ſolicitude avoided by the two friends on all occaſions, from whence I was led to ſuppoſe that death had broken thoſe domeſtic ties, the very mention of which was too diſtreſſing not to make my brother anxious to ſpare him the pangs of recollection.

" Their increaſing attachment, however, as well as my father's regard for the preſerver of his ſon, acted as a ſtimulus on curioſity, which had probably a conſiderable degree of pride for its foundation, and rendered him more inquiſitive than perhaps he would otherwiſe have been. Luckily for me, the arrival of company put a ſtop to a ſubject I was by no means prepared to enter upon, and ſeaſonably relieved me from ſo perplexing a theme.

« A ſeries of time now ſucceeded, imperceptibly tranquil and delightful: every riſing day ſeemed to beam with an increaſe of affection on the ſide of St. Hypolite, and he was equally dear to the heart of his Adelaide. Still, however, there were periods when he appeared abſent and thoughtful, when ſome ſecret affliction evidently preyed upon his mind, and cruelly counterbalanced the happineſs otherwiſe experienced. On ſuch occaſions I have watched his looks with painful anxiety, and ſeen them rivetted on my face, with an expreſſion of agonized tenderneſs and regret that made me ſhudder; at other times he would ſnatch my hand, hold it to his throbbing boſom, then ſuddenly throw it from him, and ſtriking his forehead in an unexpected paroxyſm of paſſion, precipitately retreat to the other end of the room, where he either continued to walk backwards and forwards in much apparent agitation, or elſe diſappeared altogether from my view. On his return, a penſive dejection uſually ſeemed to have taken place of more violent emotions, and not unfrequently the remains of conſcious tears have been traced on his glowing cheek.

« Scenes like theſe were not, to be ſure, very numerous; but language is inadequate to expreſs my feelings when they happened to occur.

« Once

« Once I particularly recollect the anguiſh with which he gazed upon me, while my father was ſpeaking with his accuſtomed acrimony of ſome families with whom he had long been at variance. St. Hypolite ſeemed to ſicken at the denunciations of vengeance, and unrelenting hatred the old Count poured forth againſt the ancient enemies of his Houſe; my brother turned a look of meaning and pity on his friend, which I knew not how to interpret, and immediately after, ſeizing his arm, they left the room, under ſome plauſible pretence that happened to offer at the time.

« Though the private interviews we now ſo frequently enjoyed in the preſence of my brother, had for ſome weeks been uninterrupted, and equally agreeable to all parties; yet that inward monitor, which ſeldom fails to reminds us of error, reſtrained not its ſecret admonitions on the part I was acting;—its whiſpers were heard, and acknowledged to be juſt; for I was neglecting every conſideration of filial duty, and ſelfiſhly indulging my own inclinations, without reflecting whether or not the peace of a parent would be the ſacrifice.—There were moments too, dear as we both were to my brother, in which I could not help remarking that he was ſenſible of the impropriety of our proceeding; but an inſtant reflection on the

iraſcible

iraſcible nature of my father's diſpoſition, quickly turned the ſcale; and though he would give me no ſatisfaction on any ſubject relative to the Chevalier's ſituation, I knew Narbonne's temper was too ſimilar, in ſome reſpects, to his father's, not to be perſuaded St. Hypolite was my equal in birth and family pretenſions, otherwiſe his attachment to me had never been tolerated, far leſs encouraged on the ſide of my brother.

"Occupied with more pleaſing ſubjects, I thought not of De Verney, who for ſome time had been in a diſtant province, attending on a near relation, from whom he expected a great accumulation of fortune, and who was then ſuppoſed to be on his death-bed. The Baron, indeed, took care I ſhould not altogether forget him; he wrote frequently, but his letters were thrown by unopened, and his preſence undeſired at the Caſtle of Narbonne.

"In the meanwhile, however, I could not help feeling a ſecret degree of ſurpriſe that no mention was made by St. Hypolite of any intended application to my father on the ſcore of our union.—This ſtrange ſilence was not eaſily to be accounted for; but an idea ſtill prevailing, that every attempt on my part for an explanation would betray a tacit indication of my wiſhes on the occaſion, continually

reſtrained me from all endeavours of the kind.—This indeed required no great effort, ſince the whole tenor of his conduct fully convinced me that nothing but motives of the moſt powerful nature, could have compelled him to be ſilent ſo long on a topic of ſuch importance. Beſides, the firm reliance I had on his honour, and that of my brother's, conduced to make me patiently ſubmit to a circumſtance I was well aware proceeded not from inclination, but neceſſity; and I had many reaſons to believe that the concealment, which excited my curioſity, was in ſome meaſure obſerved, to ſave me from a painful participation in a ſecret, the knowledge of which could probably be of no other uſe than diſtreſſing my mind by the certainty of its irremediable nature.

"Unfortunately for the continuance of my peace, De Verney once more returned to the Caſtle, and renewed his ſolicitations for my hand, with an air of ſuch perſevering reſolution as quickly baniſhed every preſent proſpect of tranquillity. In vain I exerted my utmoſt endeavours to perſuade him that he was deceiving himſelf, and that I never would be his; he declared his determination of applying to my father, and he flattered himſelf with but too much probability of ſucceſs, ſince his increaſe of fortune, by the death of his relation,

would

would, he knew, prove a powerful advocate in his behalf with the Count de Narbonne.

" My prayers, my tears, and my entreaties were equally ineffectual to prevent his taking this ſtep. He put his intention in execution. My father, as I had foreſeen, received the propoſal with pleaſure, and I was henceforth ordered to conſider De Verney as my future huſband!

" Confounded, ſhocked, and terrified, as well by the command I had heard, as the precipitancy with which this affair had been concluded, I retired to my chamber, the vrieſt wretch on the face of the globe!—There I ſat for ſome time in a mute ſtate of ſtupefaction, without being able to determine on any thing; at length a flood of tears came to my aid, and ſomewhat relieved the heavy oppreſſion that weighed down my heart.

" St. Hypolite and my brother had left the Caſtle on the day prior to De Verney's unlooked-for arrival, and they were not expected to return before the expiration of ten days, or a fortnight.—He ſeemed acquainted with this circumſtance, and appeared eager to profit by it; he ſuſpected my brother would not ſtand his friend on the occaſion, and he judged rightly. It was therefore his intereſt to accelerate matters as much as poſſible, nor was he deficient in this point. I had conſequently,

I found, no time to loſe, if I did not chuſe to become the victim of a wretch ſo thoroughly my averſion.

" On recovering ſome degree of reflection, the firſt idea which occurred was inſtantly to write to my brother, and acquaint him with my diſagreeable ſituation;—but, alas! how was this to be accompliſhed?—Neither he, nor his friend had mentioned, at their departure, the preciſe place of their deſtination. They had, indeed, ſpoke of poſſibly ſeeing Paris before their return; but the manner in which they talked of this intention, conveyed too vague an idea to riſk intelligence of ſuch importance upon the event of it. On ſecond thoughts, too, I became leſs anxious for the ſucceſs of this ſcheme, and I ſaw the impropriety of ſuch a ſtep, the longer I dwelt upon its natural conſequences. My brother's diſpoſition was impetuous and warm; St. Hypolite's, though tempered with milder ingredients, had ſufficient to make " Wiſdom fearful of its violence*;" a breach with the former and my father, and probably a deadly encounter between the Chevalier and his rival, was what I had every reaſon to expect, if my original deſign took place: it was therefore ſpeedily relinquiſhed in trembling horror.

* Shakeſpear.

" I

« I had no friend nor adviſer in the houſe, to whom I could apply for conſolation; and I dared not repair to the Convent during the day, leſt my ſteps ſhould be traced, and the company of De Verney intruded upon me.

« For the approach of evening I waited of courſe with much ſolicitude;—it arrived at length, and I reached my reſpected friend's habitation, without meeting with any impediment.

« It was neceſſary to be explicit, not only in regard to the preſent, but the paſt alſo. Before I concluded my little narrative, we were interrupted by a ſudden ſcream, and a footſtep was ſoon after heard in the gallery, haſtily approaching the Lady Abbeſs's apartment. The door flew open, and one of the Nuns entered; with a look of diſtraction, and in a voice of anguiſh, ſhe conjured our aſſiſtance in the cell of ſiſter Mary, where a young lady, ſhe ſaid, was expiring.

« We hurried inſtantly thither; but the Nun, to whom the little chamber belonged, no ſooner ſaw me advance, than, with an earneſt eagerneſs of manner, ſhe entreated me to leave them, and return to the Superior's room. From the number now aſſembled, I ſaw my aid was unneceſſary, and my perſon in the way; I therefore complied with her requeſt,

though rather ſurpriſed at the terms in which it was made.

" A full half-hour elapſed, and the Lady Abbeſs had not yet made her appearance; as time waſted I began to grow impatient, and ſignified this by a meſſage to her.

" I received for anſwer that ſhe could not yet quit the bed-ſide of the invalid, but would join me the moment it was practicable.

" Another half-hour paſſed, however, without making her appearance, and I began to fear I might be miſſed at home;—to remain longer was of courſe dangerous; of this I informed her, and in return ſhe deſired I would go back to the Caſtle, where I might depend on ſeeing her the following day.

" As I was leaving the room next morning, after breakfaſt, my father called me back, and ordered me to be ſeated again. I obeyed in trembling apprehenſion; and happening to glance a look at De Verney, was deeply impreſſed with terror at the air of triumph diſplayed over his whole countenance; I involuntarily ſhuddered, and motioned a ſecond time to quit the apartment.

' Be ſeated,' ſaid my father, in a ſtern voice, ' and attend to my words.'

" He

« He then proceeded to inform me, that my union with the young Baron de Verney was to take place on the third day from the preſent; that particular buſineſs rendered it requiſite to fix ſo early a period; but jewels, and every other article of dreſs, equipage, &c. &c. ſhould no leſs be attended to, and procured in due time.

« Before my father concluded this dreadful intelligence, I had recovered a little from the firſt ſhock it occaſioned; and advancing to where he ſat, with all the courage I could muſter, I threw myſelf at his feet, ſolemnly adjuring him not to deſtroy my earthly proſpects of peace and happineſs for ever.

« He regarded me for a moment with looks of riſing fury and aſtoniſhment, demanded if I was frantic, ſwore his will was not to be diſputed, and ordered me to obey it without farther reluctance. He then reached to the bell, and rung it with violence; a ſervant appeared; he was diſpatched for my maid, and on her entrance ſhe was commanded to conduct me to my own chamber, there to attend his further directions.

« Sick at heart, and unable to aſſiſt myſelf, I ſtill remained in the ſame poſture, imploring the relinquiſhment of his deſign in all the agonies of deſpair.

" Furious at a perſeverance ſo unexpected, and unaccuſtomed to every ſpecies of oppoſition in his family, the Count de Narbonne's paſſion became utterly ungovernable, and he loaded me with the moſt dreadful imprecations, if I dared to ſpeak of reſiſting his pleaſure any longer.

' Monſieur le Baron,' ſaid he, turning to De Verney, ' pray aſſiſt your future bride to her chamber;—ſhe ſeems to forget where, or before whom, ſhe is at preſent.'

" Indelicate and unfeeling, De Verney was coolly advancing for that purpoſe, when, more than ever deteſting the idea of any intercourſe with a character ſo juſtly abhorrent, I clung cleſer to my father, and claſped his knees with a look of inexpreſſible terror. Enraged beyond bounds at my determined temerity, he puſhed his chair back with violence, and diſentangling himſelf at the ſame time from my convulſive hold, I fell with ſome force upon the floor. Rightly had my father ſuppoſed me frantic; for in fact, from the beginning to the end of this cruel ſcene, I ſcarcely knew what I either ſaid or did.

" The Count de Narbonne, however, was too much of a philoſopher to be moved by parental feelings; and too much of a man to bear with patience any contradiction to a favourite ſcheme.—

He

He paid no attention to my ſituation, but walked backwards and forwards in the room, with haſty ſtrides, while pride, and the higheſt diſpleaſure, were ſtrongly marked on his ſtern unrelenting features.

" Probably ſhocked, for once in his life, at a ſcene of diſtreſs like what he now witneſſed, De Verney flew to my aſſiſtance, and, in a voice of agitation, ordered my maid to advance; for the poor girl, terrified at her maſter's looks and manner, had hitherto ſtood immoveable and trembling at the door, irreſolute whether to diſobey the old Count, or diſpleaſe me by the execution of commands to which I appeared ſo averſe.

CHAP. XIII.

" Oh married Love! thy bard ſhall own,
" When two congenial ſouls unite,
" Thy golden chains inlaid with down,
" Thy lamps with heav'n's own ſplendour bright."

LANGHORNE.

" AT this moment, when their attention was occupied in raiſing and placing my almoſt lifeleſs form on a ſofa, the door ſuddenly flew open, and the Lady Abbeſs entered, followed by a young woman, who ſeemed pale as death, and ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf.

" My father ſtopped ſhort in the middle of the room as ſhe advanced forward, and, with a perturbed, but haughty air, requeſted to know what had

had then procured him the honour of her company.

" The Lady Abbeſs ſtared at the manner in which this queſtion was addreſſed to her; and my father immediately recollecting himſelf, apologized for his abruptneſs, by pointing indignantly to me, and adding, that the perverſeneſs of that obſtinate and undutiful girl had juſtly provoked him beyond bearance; which, he doubted not, ſhe would be ſhocked to hear, as it proved how little benefit had been derived from the inſtructions of ſo able a teacher as he had entruſted her to.

" The Superior glanced a look of pity and tenderneſs to the ſide of the room where I lay; but inſtantly withdrawing her eyes, told my father ſhe was concerned to find I had diſobliged him, but ſhould be ſtill more ſo if the charge appeared, on inveſtigation, to be juſtly merited. He was going to reply with warmth; ſhe interrupted him, however, by requeſting to know if there was any truth in the report of my union with Baron de Verney? —My father drily anſwered, that two days more would have ſatisfied her enquiries on that ſubject, without taking the trouble of aſking him.

" The Lady Abbeſs coolly retorted, ſhe hoped ſo; for ſhe had always found Adelaide too attentive and attached to her, not to believe ſhe would have

informed her of an event ſo important.—'Of that,' ſaid ſhe, 'I entertain no doubt;—but the idle rumour of a connection with Baron de Verney ſurpriſed me; for I knew not there were two of the name.'

'Two of the name!' repeated my father, recoiling a few paces back, and regarding her with aſtoniſhment, 'I underſtand you not, Madam.'

"Almoſt at the inſtant of the Abbeſs's entrance, De Verney had flown out at an oppoſite door, in ſearch of a ſmelling-bottle, left in a window of the dining-parlour; a bow, therefore, *en paſſant*, was all the attention he could then pay her; and he thought not of her at his return, but was haſtening forward to me, when the vehemence with which my father re-echoed the words of the Superior attracted his notice, and he ſuddenly turned his head that way to diſcover the cauſe of it. In a moment he gave a ſtart of horror; the ſmelling-bottle dropped from his hand in a thouſand pieces, and his colour changed from red to pale alternately.

"The young perſon who accompanied the Lady Abbeſs, now firſt perceived him in the room; ſhe uttered a faint ſcream, and adding in a low voice—'It is he—it is he indeed!'—was ſinking to the floor, when her conductor, ſupporting her by the arm, led her up to the old Count, and begging leave

leave to introduce the wife of M. de Verney, deſired he would apply to that lady for any explanation of her meaning he might judge neceſſary.

" Additional aſtoniſhment had now deprived my father of ſpeech; he meaſured the ſtranger with a ſcrutinizing look, and then turning to the Abbeſs, told her, with an air of incredulity, that he ſaw through the ſcheme; but aſſured her that he was not to be ſo eaſily impoſed upon, nor would take the bare aſſertion of an unknown perſon, in a caſe of ſo much importance, unleſs other proofs could be produced to ſubſtantiate the fact.

" The Superior replied in a tone of equal haughtineſs, and boldly perſiſted in affirming her dependance on the young lady's veracity.—'But we have proofs, incontrovertible ones too, M. le Compte,' added ſhe, 'ſuch as De Verney cannot, dare not deny!'

'Baron de Verney,' cried my father, emphatically, turning round as he ſpoke, 'approach, Baron de Verney, and explain, if you can, the myſtery of this incomprehenſible buſineſs.—If——but I cannot believe it!'—And he violently trembled with agitation, as he glanced an inflamed eye of enquiry over the room.

" No Baron de Verney was, however, to be ſeen!—The broken ſmelling-bottle lay upon the floor,

floor, and his hat had fallen from the end of the ſofa.

" This latter circumſtance ſeemed to imply that he was at no great diſtance, and ſervants were quickly diſpatched in ſearch of him; but they returned ſoon after, without being able to accompliſh their orders—De Verney was no where to be met with; at length one of the domeſtics informed them that he had mounted a ready ſaddled horſe, which his own ſervant had juſt quitted, and gallopped out of ſight almoſt inſtantly, calling to his attendants to follow him to Paris as ſoon as poſſible.

" Before this intelligence was entirely concluded, my poor father threw himſelf into an armchair, and leaning over the back of it, ſtruck his forehead in an agony of rage and diſappointment not to be deſcribed.

" The Lady Abbeſs ſeated the poor fainting, weeping creature who accompanied her, on the couch where I had been laid, but from which I was now able to raiſe myſelf. On the firſt ſound of my voice my father ſtarted up, and darting a look at me, expreſſive of ſhame and ſelf-reproach, waved his hand to forbid my attendance, and ruſhed out of the room; he aſcended to his own apartment, the

the door of which we afterwards heard ſhut to with violence.

" The Lady Abbeſs now turned her attention more particularly to the unfortunate Baroneſs, whoſe weak ſpirits ſeemed totally unequal to the evils ſhe had to ſtruggle with;—ſhe ſympathized, ſhe ſoothed, ſhe reaſoned with her, and did every thing in her power to calm her mind. The unhappy young woman liſtened to her in ſilence—her grief was "not loud, but deep," and ſhe endeavoured to reſtrain the tears that would flow in ſpite of every attempt to repreſs them. They lightened her heart, however, and therefore the Abbeſs was not ſorry to ſee them. This ineſtimable friend reſiſted every entreaty of mine to ſatisfy my curioſity, or account for the bleſſed change that had now taken place; aſſuring me, nevertheleſs, that I ſhould be made fully acquainted with the whole, when I was more able to bear the recital.

" The young Baroneſs then took an affecting leave of me, and they both returned to the Convent, in ſpite of my earneſt wiſh to retain them a little longer at the Caſtle.

" My father ſtill refuſed my attendance; he kept his room the remainder of the day, and I underſtood was cloſely employed in writing letters.

" In the evening, the Superior returned to the Caſtle, but ſhe was now alone.

'Where, my dear Madame, is the poor Baroneſs?' ſaid I, eagerly.

'In her ſiſter's cell,' replied ſhe, 'in the Convent.'

"She then proceeded to tell me, that Madame de Verney was ſiſter to one of the Nuns; who, little ſuſpecting her ſecret and prior engagement with the Baron, had mentioned my rumoured union, as a piece of news, to the former, ſoon after her arrival the preceding day, on a viſit at the Monaſtery.

"It was this unwelcome intelligence which put an unexpected end to my interview on the evening of that day with the Abbeſs; and, in ſhort, produced the recent ſcene I had partly witneſſed.—She then enumerated thoſe particulars I have already mentioned, to which my own ſituation, at the time, rendered me incapable of attending; and added, that ſhe thought it probable the Baroneſs would remain in her preſent abode for ſome days, at leaſt till ſhe had fixed upon her future movements, being at this juncture unable to determine on any thing; and ſhe much feared, from the former and late conduct of her unworthy huſband, that ſhe had little to expect, either from his juſtice or affection; for he had ſolemnly ſworn he would renounce her for ever, if ſhe ventured to publiſh

their

their marriage, without his knowledge or conſent.

" As the Lady Abbeſs wiſhed to ſee my father previous to her leaving the Caſtle, a meſſage was ſent up to his chamber in her name. Some minutes paſſed before any anſwer was returned, but at length her company was requeſted above ſtairs.

" You may believe I felt no ſmall anxiety to learn the reſult of this conference; I was not, however, long kept in ſuſpenſe; my friend ſoon joined me again, and from her I was informed that my father was become much more compoſed; but that he appeared ſtill unwilling to believe the veracity of Madame de Verney, and had hinted at ſome enquiries he was determined upon making, to aſcertain the truth of her aſſertion. She added, that I muſt lay my account with finding him haughtily ſilent on the ſubject, and therefore deſired I would avoid every topic which might lead to it.—This caution was unneceſſary; I thought myſelf too happy in eſcaping it, on any terms, to run the ſmalleſt riſk of its commencement.

" I, nevertheleſs, dreaded the firſt meeting with my father; but my apprehenſions were fortunately leſſened by the arrival of ſome viſiters, which helped to remove the awkward ſituation I ſhould otherwiſe have been reduced to, if forced to undergo the

the terrors of a *tête-à-tête* with a parent in his preſent diſpoſition; and yet, what in reality had I done to be ſo much alarmed about?—I was neither the aggreſſor, nor intentional oppreſſor; yet, notwithſtanding, I felt all theſe ſenſations of anxiety and dread, that ought to be the attendant of error alone.—How inexplicable is the conſtruction of the human mind, as I have frequently thought, thus to wrap virtue and vice in the ſame habiliments!—But woe to thoſe who allow themſelves to be raſhly deceived by appearances; or, with predetermined malice, falſely judge the guiltleſs, from ſuch a ſimilitude!

"Some days had now elapſed without any material occurrence taking place; my father was diſtant, reſerved in his manner, and ſeldom ſpoke to me, except when it could not be avoided; yet I ſometimes fancied I ſaw a ſentiment of juſtice ſtruggling in his boſom, which his characteriſtic pride oppoſed giving way to; at leaſt I caught his eye dwelling upon me, once or twice, with that ſort of expreſſion which ſuggeſted ſuch an inference, and the bare idea inſtantly ſuffuſed my eyes.—Oh! of what pleaſure do thoſe parents deprive themſelves, whoſe hard hearts, unaccuſtomed to feel the tender throbs of natural affection, know not the happineſs of domeſtic enjoyment!—Cold and

inſenſible,

inſenſible, tyrannical and harſh, they ſeem only to eſtimate their own importance according to the degree of terror or pain inflicted on thoſe helpleſs beings, to whom the very circumſtances of birth and ſituation ought to have enſured a different conduct. To how limited a compaſs, in that caſe, do they blindly reduce their portion of innocent and laudable gratifications!—and how inadequate—how very inadequate are all the ſtoical and boaſted purſuits of philoſophy to indemnify them for ſuch deprivations!

"Alas! how often, with fearful ſolicitude, have I marked—have I felt, the humid eye of the trembling wife or child, deprecate effects produced by capricious rage or ill-humour, of which they knew not either the foundation or cauſe!—How acutely, in thoſe moments of anguiſh, has every lacerated feeling tacitly confeſſed that a competent ſhare of common ſenſe, to teach us the government of our paſſions, with right principles of morality, and a natural good temper, were of infinitely more conſequence, in the compoſition of a huſband or father, than all the ſtores of learning or knowledge ever poſſeſſed by the firſt genius in the univerſe!

"At length my father received ſuch anſwers to his enquiries reſpecting De Verney, as proved fully deciſive. Indeed had any ſuſpicion remained

on

on that head, his own conduct would have condemned him ſufficiently; for he made no attempt whatever to vindicate himſelf from the charge exhibited againſt him, nor apologized in any particular manner for his ſudden departure; a ſhort and ceremonious epiſtle was all he ventured to ſend on the occaſion. In it, he briefly laid the blame of his abſence on buſineſs of too urgent a nature to admit of delay; but hoped to return, ere long, and receive the honour of my plighted hand, according to their former agreement.

"Enraged beyond bearance at his perſevering preſumption, my father, in a paroxyſm of paſſion, tore the letter into a thouſand fragments, and committed them to the flames.

"On the following day he received further confirmation of this man's vileneſs, and learned, beyond a doubt, that my fortune was the ſole bait which had attracted him. It appeared, on enquiry, that his own was nominal, and already privately ſpent in every ſpecies of diſſipation and vice.

"I ſhould not have dwelt ſo long on a character of this deſcription, had not the part he afterwards bore in my ſad ſtory, and the dreadful miſery he cauſed me, rendered it requiſite to mention theſe particulars, that you may the leſs wonder at his ſubſequent conduct.

"My

« My father, now ſomewhat relaxed in his uſual ſtern reſerve, treated me with a ſmaller degree of auſterity; and I looked forward with pleaſing expectation to the expiration of the period in which I might hope for the arrival of my brother and St. Hypolite.

« A complaint, to which the old Count had long been ſubject, returned about this time with redoubled violence; two cauſes contributed to produce this incident at preſent:—Whatever irritated his mind, or occaſioned any agitation of ſpirits, always affected his corporeal frame more or leſs; and, of courſe, either anticipated the uſual ſeaſon of indiſpoſition, or increaſed its ſymptoms. The firſt ſhock received from the recent event had been attended with theſe conſequences, though his paſſions were too violent to be ſenſible of it immediately; but a circumſtance that ſoon after took place, rendered the indications of the diſorder too certain to remain longer unnoticed. During my brother's abſence, he had received orders to join his regiment without delay; a few weeks were only to elapſe before the ſad, and, as it proved, eternal ſeparation was to commence. My father felt the force of this laſt ſtroke, beyond what we ſuppoſed poſſible for a man of his temper; and every previous ſignal of the complaint, that had been

hanging

hanging about him for ſeveral days, now becoming ſtationary, at length confined him to his chamber.

" Three ſuch trying occurrences as had thus, in ſo ſhort a ſpace, trod on the heels of each other, totally overcame my father's ſmall portion of ſelf-command. The dictates of philoſophy may enable us to bear the evils of others with due coolneſs and fortitude; but it is religion alone that can truly ſupport our own minds in the hour of diſtreſs.—Unhappily his ſhare of the laſt was very inadequate to what he poſſeſſed of the former; the craſh of univerſal nature would ſcarcely have appalled him, if his own ſafety was ſecured; but that once endangered, the Count de Narbonne was no longer invulnerable; he therefore became again capricious, diſcontented, and ſullen.

" The meeting with the two friends at length took place, and my recent ſufferings were all loſt in the ecſtacy of the moment.

" On the recital of thoſe ſufferings, how did they both reprobate their lengthened abſence!—how did they accuſe me of want of confidence in their friendſhip, for letting them remain ignorant of my ſituation!—Often, in a generous paroxyſm of fury, they ſwore to ſacrifice the wretched De Verney to their vengeance; and all my influence

was,

was, at times, ineffectual to recal their reaſon or compoſure.

" By degrees, however, they began to view matters in a different light, and evils, foreign to the preſent moment, were abſorbed in the ſad contemplation of exiſting ones.—Alas! what language can do juſtice to our mutual feelings when the dreaded idea of ſeparation occurred?—Independent of the love I bore a dear and ever-lamented brother, my own fate, and that of the Chevalier ſeemed to hang upon the fatal moment of their departure; for under what pretence could the latter remain at Narbonne, after his friend had left it?—Such a ſtep would have had a ſtrange appearance in the eyes of the world; and yet to be left in ſo cruel a ſituation, cut off at once, in a manner, from almoſt every tie and every conſolation on earth, was ſcarcely to be thought of with patience. Beſides, St. Hypolite ſhortly expected a ſimilar order to that my brother had received, and therefore to loſe him, during the limitted term of his abode in France, was doubly afflictive to my feelings.

" Alas! how changed was the late ſmiling proſpect now become!—how unaccountably prophetic of miſery every contemplation of the future!—No longer was that future gilded by the illuſive rays

rays of cheering hope!—a dark and dreary ſhade of horror ſeemed to envelope the faſcinating picture of happineſs, drawn by the glowing hand of youth and affection. My heart ſickened as imagination perverſely recurred to the chapter of poſſibilities; and an oppreſſive heavineſs mournfully weighed down the mind to a ſtate of inconceivable dejection.—Much as St. Hypolite certainly felt on the occaſion, his condition was infinitely better than mine. To the diſtreſs mutually experienced by both, I had the additional pain of reſtraint to ſtruggle with;—that reſtraint by which genuine delicacy muſt ever be accompanied in the female heart, ſituated as I then was. Indeed my ſorrows have been moſtly through life confined to my own boſom, while the limitted portion of happineſs allotted me, was freely participated with others.

" A few days before my brother's departure, he had a private conference with the Count, his father. On quitting the apartment of the latter, he joined St. Hypolite and myſelf in the garden; an unuſual ſolemnity ſat on his features, and his whole appearance beſpoke a mind occupied with ſome important occurrence.

' Our father, my dear Adelaide,' ſaid he, ' continues much indiſpoſed;—my departure, at this unfortunate juncture, ſits heavy on his thoughts;

his

his ſpirits are low, and conſequently he ſees things through a gloomy medium. To this circumſtance I can only aſcribe the directions now given me, for I truſt we ſhall yet meet again, and ſpend many happy days with each other;—but as it muſt be allowed, that at his term of years the prolongation of life is uncertain, and as my diſtance from Narbonne will ſhortly be too conſiderable to admit of frequent, or perhaps neceſſary communication, he has judged it requiſite, in caſe of any unforeſeen contingency, to entruſt you with the diſcloſure of a ſecret, at preſent only known to ourſelves. To you, however, it is not to be excluſively confided; the preſervation of life, for which I ſtand indebted to St. Hypolite, his conſpicuous merit and virtues, have all extenſive demands upon our gratitude and friendſhip;—to evince, therefore, the juſt ſenſe entertained of his incalculable worth, and our well-placed dependance on his principles, my father has determined upon aſſociating him, as a party, in what I am now commiſſioned to acquaint you with. The ſubject is of conſequence, and, ſhould civil diſcord hereafter ſhake our national tranquillity, may, perhaps, prove no empty nor uſeleſs piece of knowledge.—About an hour hence, accompany me to the ſaloon at the Rock of Narbonne, and you ſhall there learn what is to follow.'

" We met at the ſpecified time and place, according to appointment. It is needleſs to be minute on what paſſed at this interview, as you, my dear Charlotte, are already ſo fully acquainted with the introductory part of it; ſuffice it to ſay, that after adminiſtering the uſual oath of ſecrecy, my brother diſcloſed and explained the particulars relative to this ſubterraneous retreat, which my father wiſhed me to learn before his ſon's departure from the Caſtle. He, no doubt, apprehended his own increaſing infirmities might render him unable to venture, with ſafety, through the then damp abode, or be unequal to the fatigue of ſuch an undertaking, were it required of him.

" The interior of the place was by no means, at that time, in the order it is at preſent; however, the ſaloon and this chapel were ſtill kept in tolerable repair, and even maſs often celebrated in the latter.

" As my brother concluded this piece of information, with the execution of which his father had entruſted him, he addreſſed me in a yet more ſolemn and impreſſive voice. The whole of his manner this evening was ſo unlike the gay and volatile character which naturally belonged to him, that an indeſcribable ſenſation took poſſeſſion of my mind,

and

and indelibly fixed every circumſtance beyond the power of time to obliterate from remembrance.

" St. Hypolite too, alas! he likewiſe appeared to be under the influence of ſome ſimilar fatality! He gazed on my face as my brother ſpoke, then ſuddenly quitting the trembling hand he had hitherto cloſely graſped in one of his, ſtarted from his ſeat, and traverſed the room in evident agitation; his friend obſerved him with a look of commiſeration, and at one time ſtopped in the middle of his diſcourſe to adminiſter conſolation. He took him by the arm, and they retired to a window; there I overheard Narbonne, in a low voice, recommending a greater degree of fortitude and compoſure to his unhappy companion; and the injunction was enforced by urging it, if not on his own account, at leaſt on mine, who already evidently ſuffered more diſtreſs than my mind or ſpirits were competent to ſuſtain. Something elſe paſſed in a ſtill lower accent, too guarded to reach me, and ſoon after my brother reſeated himſelf by my ſide.

' The Chevalier, my dear ſiſter,' continued he, taking my hand tenderly, ' has ſomething of conſequence, relative to your mutual happineſs, to communicate. Hitherto vainly waiting for a favourable change of exiſting difficulties, which can

now no longer be hoped for, the approaching criſis of ſeparation admits not of further delay. Confident you will act with the ſtricteſt propriety, and convinced my ſentiments on the ſubject will not be diſregarded, I ſhall frankly acknowledge my wiſhes coincide, in every reſpect, with thoſe St. Hypolite means to acquaint you with.—Let not then, my beloved Adelaide, let not falſe and unavailing notions of delicacy interfere in your deciſion; but nobly follow what, I am ſure, are the dictates of your own heart. Conſider your brother in the light of a parent, in this inſtance at leaſt. Relieve him from a world of anxiety on your account;—relieve him from the painful idea of bidding you, perhaps, an eternal adieu, while he recollects, with an aching heart, your comfortleſs, your unprotected, and helpleſs ſituation, ſhould the ſtroke of death (which at preſent is not improbable) deprive you of a father's guardian care.—Do you yet comprehend what I aim at, Adelaide?—My ſanction, my warmeſt approbation attend an union with the preſerver of my life, and the friend of my boſom. But draw not a miſtaken concluſion from what I have ſaid; you muſt not be deceived in ſuppoſing that, in this caſe, I alſo act by my father's directions or conſent;—however ſincerely he may eſteem the Chevalier, no hope of that nature can be entertained

tained in respect to him. Filial affection would gladly throw a veil over parental failings; but the critical period at which we are now arrived, admits not of the pious deception. Too well we all know his violent and unforgiving disposition, where prejudice has once established itself, to flatter ourselves with any radical cure taking place at this time of day; let us not then trust to appearances, or apparent alteration of temper; the former are generally fallacious, and the latter often the effect of accidental circumstances, merely productive of temporary reformation, and nothing more. I say temporary; for, with infinite sorrow, do I observe many recent instances to confirm the assertion, particularly since the affair of De Verney disappointed some of his most favourite schemes.

'That business, however, did not put a stop to his views on your account; for, I do assure you, he is determined to dispose of your hand to the first person of rank and fortune whose offers meet with his approbation; and that such a person cannot be St. Hypolite, you will quickly be convinced of, when informed that the Chevalier is son to the Baron de St. Cyprian, between whose family and that of Narbonne, a deadly and hereditary enmity has long existed; and to the present representative of which, though all intercourse has ceased for

many years, my father ſtill preſerves the moſt decided and perſonal averſion.

'This painful, but now neceſſary communication has hitherto been concealed, on ſeveral accounts; but principally, leſt a knowledge of its irremediable nature ſhould have too ſeverely diſtreſſed a mind formed with feelings ſo acute as your's; and likewiſe in the expectation of ſome favourable incident occurring, in the courſe of procraſtination, which might alter the aſpect of affairs.

'Providence, nevertheleſs, has thought proper to arrange matters after its own judgment, and the ſuperior direction of ſuch a hand admits not of our inveſtigation.

'I ſhall now leave the Chevalier to plead his own cauſe. If you can bring yourſelf to accord with both our wiſhes, by giving him a legal right to call you his before my departure, I can only ſay that my mind will be relieved from a load of anxiety, which muſt make every other circumſtance comparatively eaſy.

'Adelaide, my dear Adelaide,' continued he, taking my hand, and regarding me with infinite tenderneſs, 'to ſee you the wife of St. Hypolite is the higheſt ſatisfaction I almoſt look for on this ſide

of

of eternity!—Theſe are my parting words; reflect on them, and—act accordingly!'

"As my brother haſtily left the room to conceal his emotion, St. Hypolite graſped the hand Narbonne had, almoſt unknown to myſelf, placed in his; he preſſed it to his heart, and gracefully bending one knee, entreated I would return a favourable anſwer to their mutual requeſt.

'No time, my deareſt Adelaide,' cried he, 'is now to be loſt. To expect the Count's approbation of our union, or even a paſſive conduct on the occaſion is impoſſible; to live without you, equally ſo!—Oh then daſh not all my future hopes of happineſs to the ground!—There is every reaſon to believe there will be an attempt made to ſacrifice your hand to the caprice of a parent; who, pardon me for the expreſſion, too little conſiders your peace of mind, provided his own ſchemes are carried into execution.—I will go farther, and honeſtly confeſs, that what my friend has juſt hinted, is but too true; for to him your father has pretty plainly acknowledged his ſecret intentions relative to you.—Be aſſured I cannot ſurvive your loſs!—Beſides, though not the ſmalleſt proſpect of preſent conſent is to be expected, who knows but, when matters are found to be concluſive, he may then become leſs inexorable? At any rate the ſtep will have

your brother's warmeſt ſanction; and my family, like myſelf, will receive you with open arms, as the firſt and beſt gift of Heaven, whenever it is judged proper to publiſh my happineſs!'

"What ſhall I ſay, my dear Charlotte?—A thouſand arguments, ſtill more powerful than thoſe already enumerated, but too long to particularize at preſent, were ſo ſtrenuouſly enforced by advocates, whoſe eloquence was more than equal to the taſk of perſuaſion even if ſingly employed, but united, againſt inclination I found myſelf inadequate to combat; that, in an evil hour, I yielded a reluctant conſent, and, by doing ſo, ſealed the fate of others in blood!—Oh God! and do I exiſt to this lengthened period, after the fatal, the deadly cataſtrophe!—do I really exiſt to relate the horrid tale!—Yes, I do;—for it was my predeſtined lot to drink the bitter cup of remembered anguiſh through a long, long courſe of years; and to have life prolonged merely for the purpoſe of evincing what the human heart is capable of ſuſtaining!

"The urgency of the friends was too great to admit of leiſure for reflection, and they ſcarcely allowed me a moment for that purpoſe. Indeed my brother, who ſoon joined us again, painted the ſituation I ſhould be left in, at his departure, in ſuch forcible colours, that my uſual fortitude ſhrunk before

before the gloomy and ſolitary proſpect. It is true, outward appearances were the ſame, but, alas! how changed in a mental view!

"I had for ſome time enjoyed the moſt delightful ſociety, and all the heartfelt ſenſations produced by love and brotherly affection. New ideas had preſented themſelves, and hopes of a faſcinating nature taken hold of my mind. I had experienced a reſpite from parental ſeverity, and, in a general way, no longer wept through the weary hours of lonely retirement, unheeded and unattended to. That ſeverity, however, ſeemed gradually increaſing to overwhelm me, in proportion as I became leſs able to reſiſt it—in proportion as the ſources of my recent comfort were to be withdrawn!—No longer bleſſed with the ſoothing voice of friendſhip or love—no kind, ſympathizing heart at hand to conſole or ſupport me under the preſſure of ſufferings, which filial duty, and the gentleneſs of my own temper left me unable to ſtruggle againſt, and which, in ſome hour of deſperation, might lead me to a compliance with orders ſufficient to imbitter every remaining moment of exiſtence.

"Till the affair of De Verney, my youth had precluded any apprehenſion of a matrimonial ſacrifice being added to other domeſtic afflictions; but

now that ideas of this kind had once occupied my father's thoughts, it was hard to ſay what I might not have to expect on that ſcore. I might become the legal property of ſome avaricious, narrow-minded tyrant (for none elſe would accept of a hand, given with reluctance or averſion), and not only be doomed the victim of unmerited ſuſpicion by ſuch a character, but alſo riſk my father's laſting reſentment for preſuming to diſpute his will, or evincing any difficulty in complying with it. Thus would my miſery be fixed and unalterable on all ſides.

"On the contrary, by yielding to the united wiſhes of the two perſons deareſt to my heart, and which accorded with all my own ideas of future felicity, half of the former evils would at leaſt be avoided; and if wretchedneſs was to be my lot from ſome quarter or another, it would not, at leaſt, approach under the form of matrimonial diſcord.—There happineſs would be enſured to me in the poſſeſſion of a huſband, whoſe attachment and tender affection could never be purchaſed at too great a price; while the ſanction and approbation of a brother, ſo truly valuable, would be added to other circumſtances of pleaſing reflection, and, in ſome meaſure, indemnify me for all I might ſuffer from my

my father's unrelenting determination on the occaſion.

" Do not, however, dear Charlotte, think I paid too little attention to conſiderations of filial duty, by this method of reaſoning. Heaven is my witneſs, the moſt diſtant idea of actual tranſgreſſion, in this point, would have rendered me infinitely wretched, could I have ſuppoſed parental affection ſtrong enough to be affected by the diſappointment of any other paſſion than avarice or ambition.—Had my father poſſeſſed one half of the amiable diſpoſitions my dear, ill-fated mother was bleſſed with, no earthly advantage, of a ſelfiſh nature, would have prevailed with me to heſitate for a ſingle moment on the ſteps to be purſued: but, as I have already ſaid, I never knew what it was to experience the tenderneſs of a father. Cold, diſtant reſerve, or ſtern, capricious ſeverity were generally ſubſtituted in its place by the Count de Narbonne, and the uſual proofs I received of my dependance on ſo near a relative.

" A continuance of indiſcriminate bad treatment ſeldom, if ever, anſwers any good purpoſe, and is much apter to harden the mind, and inſpire a ſpirit of reſiſtance, than effect a reformation of error. We are ready to think the degree of puniſhment, when unreaſonably extended, greater

than the failing merits; expecting to meet with conſtant diſapprobation, we conſider it as a thing of courſe, and conſequently become callous to the voice of the oppreſſor. Unconſcious of their progreſs, our thoughts, in that caſe, gradually aſſume a ſelfiſh tendency, which, in time, muſt weaken the ties of conſanguinity, early planted in our hearts by the inſtinctive hand of Nature.

" For my part, I wiſhed, ardently wiſhed to pleaſe my father; but it cannot be denied that his preſence hung over me as a painful reſtraint, and his commands were ever liſtened to with trembling apprehenſion.

" The mildeſt and beſt diſpoſitions in the world (if their ſpirits and health are not ſacrificed in the interim), born with feelings of an acute deſcription, will, I aver, revolt againſt a continual ſeries of ill-temper, and unprovoked injuries, from whatever quarter they may be inflicted.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

" My heart he gain'd ;
" Nor did I long refuſe the hand he begg'd :
" My brother's preſence authoriz'd our marriage."

HOME.

" TWO days before my brother's departure, I was privately, but irrevocably united to the choſen object of my tendereſt affections. Here, in this very ſpot, was the ceremony performed, where he now lies mouldering in the duſt !—My nurſe and her huſband were alone entruſted with the event, for I had not courage to mention it to the Lady Abbeſs ; perſuaded that, however ſhe might ſecretly exculpate me, from knowing the difficulties of my ſituation, the reſpect due to her own character and

ſtation in life, would oblige her to oppoſe the proſecution of an affair, which, if once fairly over, would be viewed by her with that candour and partial indulgence ſhe had ever ſhewn me.

" My poor brother's expreſſions of pleaſure on the concluſion of this event, were ſcarcely inferior to thoſe of his friend. He left Narbonne with an appearance of ſatisfaction in his looks and manner, that almoſt indemnified me for the late ſtruggle I had once felt to oblige him, and rendered the pang of ſeparation leſs diſtreſſing, from the certainty of having gratified him, as far as lay in my power, by a compliance with the firſt wiſh of his boſom, in favour of St. Hypolite.

" His departure, nevertheleſs, hung heavy on my mind, and I felt as if deprived of more than a parent, as the laſt ſound of his voice vibrated on my ear.

" Alas! it was ſurely a prophetic ſenſation; for the recording angel had already numbered his days, and marked the termination of their final courſe in France, where, ah! where he was never more to return!

" The Chevalier accompanied him to Paris, where he had ſome buſineſs to ſettle before his embarkation.

" My

" My father, by a ſtrange ſtroke of caprice, ſeemed to have become gradually indifferent to St. Hypolite, as the time of his ſon's leaving Narbonne approached; in fact he ſeemed to take no real intereſt in any thing, except what adminiſtered to the ruling paſſions of his mind, and St. Hypolite had never been conſidered by him either as a man of rank or fortune; he, therefore, coolly looked upon the ties of gratitude as now diſſolved by the abſence of Narbonne, on whoſe account they had firſt been extended to his preſerver.

" Luckily, from ſome miſtake in his intelligence, or rather ſome miſapprehenſion of it, he entertained an idea that the two friends had finally departed, and were both to ſail for the ſame deſtination. In this notion it was not our intention to undeceive him; and indeed St. Hypolite's manner of bidding him farewel, was calculated to confirm the ſuppoſition, without deſigning to impoſe upon him in that reſpect.

" What a dreary proſpect was now preſented to my view!—The parting, the heart-rending parting with my huſband and my brother, was perpetually before my eyes!—a heavy oppreſſion hung on my ſpirits; and no where could I find relief from the reſtleſs inquietude that haraſſed my mind. I wandered from room to room, gazing with a vacant

vacant ſtare on every ſpot where happineſs had once been known to me, where ſome few paſt hours of my life had glided away in comparative peace and tranquillity;—all was now ſolitary, joyleſs, and ſtill!

"When my attendance in the Count's apartment could be diſpenſed with, I conſtantly haſtened to this place, and poured out my ſoul in prayers for their ſafety, on the ſteps of the altar where our irrevocable engagement had been concluded; and, mentally embodying the dear objects of anxiety, I often ſat meditating on the viciſſitudes of life, till the Convent bell warned me to repair home again. I frequently ſpent ſome hours alſo at my nurſe's habitation, and wept over a ſad prophetic ſenſation in her ſympathizing preſence.

"The Chevalier, it is true, was not to leave France immediately; but the period of his continuance was uncertain and precarious, and our proſpects of meeting no leſs ſo. We had, indeed, fixed on means for obtaining another interview, and our knowledge of the ſecrets of the rock, proved propitious to the deſign of conducting it with privacy.

"My father ſtill remained confined to his chamber, of courſe we had little to fear from any perſonal ſurpriſe; and unſuſpicious of ſuch an event as

as my marriage with St. Hypolite, he had no great chance of receiving any intimation of the truth from domeſtics, whoſe attachment to me was at leaſt equal to the dread they generally felt for their maſter's ſtern and haughty manners; of courſe, if even ſo diſpoſed, I knew none of the houſehold would venture to addreſs him on ſuch a topic, unleſs he himſelf particularly commanded the communication; and as for viſiters, ſince my brother's departure, few of that deſcription now entered the Caſtle, and when they happened to do ſo, the old Count uſually declined ſeeing them.

"You may eaſily ſuppoſe then, that thus ſituated, and with ſo ſecure a retreat as the Rock of Narbonne furniſhed for the purpoſe, we were tolerably eaſy on this head.

"As the time fixed upon for our interview was yet at a little diſtance, I had one of the apartments put in ſome order for the reception of my huſband. This was eaſily effected by means of Margaretta, whoſe houſe adjoins the rock, and from whence there is a concealed communication with one ſide of the latter.

"The temporary employment this occupation engaged me in, detached my thoughts from more melancholy contemplations; and the idea that gave birth to my ſolicitude on the ſubject, was a ſource of

of luxurious enjoyment, only known to the happy few who delight in obtaining a huſband's approbation, by performing any action which may evince the value they put on his applauſe, and the tranſport they feel in contributing to his pleaſure or convenience.

" This buſineſs, at leaſt as much of it as could now be accompliſhed, was concluded ſome days before the Chevalier was yet expected; but ſlowly as time appeared to elapſe, the wiſhed-for period at length arrived, and brought with it him I ſo ardently longed to ſee.

" Sorrow, apprehenſion, and every diſturber of tranquillity were once again baniſhed from my view, and two days rolled over our heads without either of us having ſufficient courage to think of a ſeparation.

" Some years prior to this period, my nurſe, Margaretta, had fitted up a ſmall room on the back part of her reſidence, which was ſolely appropriated to my uſe, when I choſe to viſit her. Its aſpect was ſolitary and romantic, and it communicated with the interior of the rock by a narrow paſſage, which apparently ſeemed to lead to a little terrace on the ſide of the houſe, where it joined with the ſtony maſs. Here St. Hypolite took up his oſtenſible abode; he paſſed for a diſtant relation of her's;

her's; and, to remove, or evade the ſcrutinizing eye of ſuſpicion, where it was poſſible to guard againſt its effects, Margaretta ſeized a public opportunity of requeſting my permiſſion for that purpoſe.

"As I had always been in the habit of ſeeing my nurſe frequently, and as the ſaloon and this chapel were then undergoing ſome repairs, which I often ſuperintended, there was nothing uncommon in my ſteps being directed to the Rock of Narbonne, more at this than at any other period when I felt an inclination to viſit it.

"In the courſe of our interviews, my huſband entered more minutely into his domeſtic affairs than he had yet found an opportunity of doing ſince our marriage.

"It appeared that from early youth he had ſpent moſt of his life abroad with a relation of his mother's, whoſe fortune was immenſe, and who adopted him for his heir, on condition of taking his wife's name, of whom he was paſſionately fond, when he reached a certain age. As the Count de St. Cyprian, his father, had then an elder ſon, and two daughters, his company at home was readily diſpenſed with, eſpecially as ſuch advantages to himſelf were likely to be the conſequence. Inclination early led him to the choice of a military life; his uncle and benefactor had ſpent his youth

in

in that line; he approved of his nephew's predilection in its favour, and the latter therefore entered into a French regiment, then in the Weſt Indies, in which he ſoon roſe to a diſtinguiſhed ſtation.

" Count St. Cyprian was a man of an eaſy, indolent temper, fond of perſonal indulgence and domeſtic ſociety; but though the repreſentative of a noble Houſe, his fortune, from a variety of concomitant circumſtances, was by no means affluent; and it was, of courſe, a matter of great moment to get a younger ſon ſo advantageouſly provided for; particularly as it left him more at liberty to make a ſuitable ſettlement on his daughters, without any conſiderable diminution of the ſource from whence their eldeſt brother was afterwards to ſupport the dignity of his family and name.

" About a year before our acquaintance commenced, the Chevalier aſſumed the appellation of St. Hypolite, in compliance with the requeſt of his generous uncle; and, almoſt immediately after that event, intelligence arrived from France that his mother had paid the debt of nature. Her death was ſoon followed by that of his brother, who had ever been of a weak, ſickly conſtitution. On this latter occurrence taking place, his father had written to urge his immediate return home; but, unfortunately, it was not then in his power to

obey

obey the mandate, as the ſtation his regiment was at that period ordered upon, precluded every idea of abſence.

" Intervening obſtacles, however, being at length in ſome degree removed, and the important ſervice he had rendered my brother having introduced them to each other in ſo intereſting a manner, they obtained permiſſion to reviſit this kingdom; and landing at the neareſt ſea-port the veſſel could reach, they proceeded to Narbonne, and were received as already mentioned.

" Informed of his preſerver's family and rank in France, acquainted likewiſe with the hereditary hatred exiſting between it and the Houſe of Narbonne, my brother had to lay his plans accordingly. The name of St. Hypolite was totally unknown to his father; it was conſequently agreed to retain it; and the Chevalier, under that denomination, met with a degree of friendſhip and attention, which not all his own individual merit, nor even the particular obligations we owed him, could have procured any perſon, however diſtantly connected with the Count de St. Cyprian, if known to be ſo, or diſtinguiſhed by the title of that ancient Houſe.

" I think I formerly ſaid, that St. Hypolite had left us ſoon after his arrival, under pretence of urgent buſineſs. He flew to the arms of his father,

father, with all the warmth of filial affection.—But how was he ſhocked and confounded to find that father, whom his imagination had repreſented as ſtill deeply mourning the loſs of an amiable wife and favourite ſon, already united to another woman!

"At the waters of Bareges, whither he had been ordered for his health, was a widow lady, whoſe conſummate art and diſſimulation proved too powerful for a man of the Count's irreſolute temper to defend himſelf againſt, and he ſoon became the dupe of her artifices.

"As the Chevalier's uncle had died ſoon after the deceaſe of his mother, and left him in very affluent circumſtances, her premature ſubſtitute flattered herſelf that either the chance of war, or the yellow fever, which was then raging in the Weſt India Iſlands with great violence, would diſpatch the former after his benefactor; in which caſe, little doubt was entertained of obtaining the whole inheritance for a favourite, but unworthy ſon, by her firſt huſband, whoſe temper and diſpoſition were but too much the counterpart of her own, not to be deeply intereſted in his welfare.

"To accompliſh this deſign, her unfortunate ſtep-daughters ſuffered every mortification malice, envy, or avarice could inflict, in expectation of driving

driving them to ſeek tranquillity in the walls of a Convent; or at leaſt forcing them to quit the paternal roof, in ſuch a manner as might incur their father's laſting diſpleaſure, and conſequently deprive them of all title to that wealth ſhe had otherwiſe diſpoſed of in imagination.

"Her machinations were partly ſucceſsful:—one of the young ladies retired to a Convent; but the other, miſtreſs of more fortitude and reſolution, and probably ſuſpecting the ſecret motives of her mother-in-law's conduct, bore up againſt the ſtorm, determined not to be acceſſary in bringing misfortunes on her own head, by weakly ſinking under the ſtroke of unmerited ſeverity.

"In regard to Madame de St. Cyprian's ſon, the Chevalier knew little about him, otherwiſe than that he was a diſſipated young man, of faſhionable morals, and of daring perſeverance in any point where his paſſions took the lead. Such, at leaſt, was the character given of him by Mademoiſelle de St. Cyprian; who, notwithſtanding, had never ſeen this new relative, as he had not yet condeſcended to congratulate his worthy mother on her nuptials, in ſpite of her earneſt and reiterated importunities to procure that gratification.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

" Had reaſon ever yet the pow'r
" To talk down grief, or bid the tortur'd wretch
" Not feel his anguiſh ?"

WHITEHEAD.

" IN this ſituation the Chevalier found his father's family when he firſt left Narbonne.

" Madame de St. Cyprian's conſternation on his ſudden appearance (no opportunity having previouſly occurred for acquainting the Count with his purpoſed return) is not to be deſcribed. Its immediate effects threw her off her guard, and enabled him, with his ſiſter's aſſiſtance, in ſome meaſure, to develop her intentions; while he had the mortification to obſerve, in numberleſs inſtances, the ſucceſs of her artifices in gradually gaining

gaining an aſcendency over the mind of her infatuated huſband. A diſcovery of this nature, with its attendant conſequences, was little calculated to render his former home agreeable; he quickly perceived himſelf conſidered as an unwelcome gueſt in his father's houſe, and therefore bidding it adieu, returned again to the more intereſting ſociety he had recently quitted at Narbonne.

" My huſband concluded his domeſtic intelligence, by nobly declaring that, as he had not accuſtomed himſelf to expect any material ſhare of the hereditary fortune (which was unqueſtionably in his father's power to diſpoſe of at pleaſure), the Count's declining days ſhould never be made uneaſy by any ſtruggle, or objection to its aſſignment, on his ſide; of courſe, whatever mode of proceeding appeared moſt conducive to parental tranquillity, was ſure of receiving his unqualified ſanction, where pecuniary affairs were merely the ſubject of diſcuſſion. As for his ſiſter, he knew it was in his own power to provide for her amply, and therefore felt no anxiety on that account.

' For this determination, or theſe ſentiments,' continued the Chevalier, ' I certainly can claim no particular merit; ſince the wealth I may properly call my own, and of which I am already in poſſeſſion, is fully ſufficient to ſupport, with ſplendour,

the rank of my anceſtors—the only legacy my father may poſſibly leave me, ſhould it be my lot to ſurvive him.

'Senſible of the advantages derived from high birth and affluent circumſtances (an union ſeldom viewed with indifference, even by thoſe in the moſt elevated ſtation), I ſometimes ventured to indulge the tranſporting idea, that, aided by ſuch powerful auxiliaries, and the flattering partiality the Count de Narbonne has evinced in my favour, every prejudice might be laid aſide, every obſtacle to my happineſs removed, originating from the ſource of ancient animoſity, or hereditary rivalſhip.—That I was too ſanguine in my expectations, a very ſhort period convinced me; for a diſtant hint, intentionally thrown out in converſation by your brother, which one day led to ſome trifling introduction of my family name, operated with the force of electricity on the nerves of his irritated auditor; and, with the moſt ſtern inflexibility of countenance, my friend was inſtantly commanded to avoid ſo hateful a topic, as he valued the preſent or future diſpleaſure of a juſtly offended parent.

'The effects of ill-directed paſſion, in ſuperior characters, I can pity, as the early errors of improper indulgence and a wrong education; but for a malevolent diſpoſition I cannot feel the ſame compaſſion.

compaſſion. Pardon me then, Adelaide, if I confeſs that an involuntary ſenſation of horror chilled my blood, when the Count de Narbonne even went ſo far as to expreſs a ſtrong degree of unaccountable ſatisfaction at ſome accidental intelligence relative to my father's preſent declining ſtate of health; becauſe, in the event of his death, the name and family honours became extinct!

'From what ſource of knowledge this latter foundation of Chriſtian comfort proceeded, my friend and I were equally at a loſs to determine. The idea, however, was conſolatory, in one reſpect, even to ourſelves, ſince it ſerved to convince us that my exiſtence, as the ſon of his reprobated antagoniſt, was apparently unſuſpected by him, from whom it was moſt neceſſary to conceal it.—A report once in circulation of my having fallen in the ſame engagement, where my acquaintance with your brother originally commenced, might poſſibly have contributed to this miſtake; or, what is ſtill more likely, the Count perhaps remained uninformed that ſuch a perſon as myſelf had ever been an inhabitant of the world; for he appeared in a general way totally ignorant of moſt circumſtances connected with the Houſe of St. Cyprian, that being a topic no one had for long, I preſume, ventured to introduce in his preſence.

Indeed your brother has frequently told me that the violence, and perſevering nature of his father's reſentment were ſo well known, that every alluſion to any of its objects, was carefully avoided by all who wiſhed to remain on friendly terms with him.'

" After this interview," purſued the Counteſs, " I ſaw not my huſband for ſome time; he had buſineſs of a domeſtic and regimental nature to tranſact in Paris, and different parts of the kingdom, the various branches of which required perſonal attendance, and conſequently a ſpeedy repetition of his viſit was not to be expected. Beſides, my father was now in a convaleſcent ſtate, and beginning to leave his room again; a circumſtance that made the ſtricteſt precaution on our ſide neceſſary, leſt ſuſpicion, with its ever wakeful eyes, ſhould accidentally reſt upon our hitherto well-guarded ſecret. Nevertheleſs, by the aſſiſtance of my faithful Margaretta, our correſpondence was re-eſtabliſhed on its former footing, and I had at leaſt the conſolation of frequently hearing from him.

" The firſt letter, however, which I received after his returning to the reſidence of his father, contained a piece of intelligence by no means of the moſt agreeable nature. What related to the

ſubject

ſubject in queſtion was mentioned in the following terms:—

" On entering the room where the family uſually aſſembles, the firſt object I encountered was your late admirer, the Baron de Verney, leaning in an eaſy, indolent poſture on the back of my ſiſter Magdeleine's chair, and converſing with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. He ſaw me not at firſt, being apparently too particularly engaged to beſtow any attention on ſubjects foreign to that which then occupied him. The ſituation in which they were both placed, near one of the windows, favoured my approach without attracting their notice, till I addreſſed my father, who was reading in a diſtant part of the room. At the ſound of my voice De Verney turned ſuddenly round; an involuntary ſtart marked his ſecret emotion at the ſight that preſented itſelf to his view, and his colour underwent a tranſient alteration, in ſpite of that natural fund of aſſurance ſo eminently conſpicuous in his character: nevertheleſs, he ſeemed quickly to recollect himſelf, and, without appearing to obſerve my preſence, reſumed his former poſition, bending at the ſame time over my ſiſter's

embroidering frame, in the attitude of a perſon abſorbed in admiration, but in fact to conceal his increaſing agitation from the penetrating eye that he could not but ſee was fixed upon him. A repetition of ſome queſtions from my father, firſt rouſed me from the ſtate of ſurpriſe a diſcovery ſo unexpected had produced; and Magdeleine, who had hitherto been alternately occupied with her work and the converſation of De Verney, raiſing her head at the moment, ſpeedily perceived the vicinity of her brother. In an inſtant the frame was overturned; ſhe ruſhed paſt the yet more aſtoniſhed Baron, and throwing herſelf into my arms, exclaimed, in a voice of tranſport—

'My dear, dear brother, how rejoiced am I to ſee you!'

"De Verney, with a countenance expreſſive of mortified pride, and conſcious humiliation, eyed us with a look that, to thoſe who knew his private character, muſt have conveyed a very adequate idea of the real feelings by which he was then agitated. Again he aſſumed the ſemblance of unconcern, and turning over ſeveral pieces of muſic, that lay ſcattered on my ſiſter's piano, pretended to be in ſearch of ſome particular air which he wiſhed to diſcover amongſt them. Magdeleine, now become more compoſed, and conceiving we were ſtrangers to each

each other, recollected that an introduction might be expected on both ſides; ſhe therefore begged leave to perform that ceremony, by preſenting me to the Baron de Verney. I bowed without advancing, and coolly obſerved, that I had been favoured with the honour ſhe intended me ſome time ago; though I little thought to meet with a renewal of the acquaintance under that roof.

'And yet,' cried my ſiſter, laughing, 'there is ſurely nothing very wonderful in ſuch an occurrence; for it is natural enough to ſuppoſe the ſon of Madame de St. Cyprian might occaſionally viſit his mother.'

"Heavens! what was my aſtoniſhment and chagrin at this diſcovery!—Ere I could properly arrange my ideas, the Baron had fixed upon his mode of proceeding. He aſſumed a look of importance, and piqued, no doubt, at the ſlight bow I had returned to his more profound one, reared himſelf up with much dignity; obſerving, at the ſame time, that the ſurpriſe, occaſioned by ſuch an unexpected rencontre, was perfectly mutual, ſince he certainly could not have imagined the Chevalier de St. Hypolite, and the young Count de St. Cyprian, were one and the ſame perſon."

"It is here neceſſary to obſerve," ſaid Madame de Narbonne, laying down her huſband's letter, which ſhe had taken from a pocket-book, and thus far peruſed, for Charlotte's information, "it is here neceſſary to obſerve, that the Chevalier, ſince his brother's death, was always mentioned at home by the family title of the eldeſt ſon, though the Weſt Indian appellation of St. Hypolite had been retained at Narbonne for obvious reaſons.—Thus, in Madame de St. Cyprian's correſpondence with the Baron, my huſband was only known by the former name; and this being De Verney's firſt viſit to his mother, no domeſtic occurrence had yet been particularly entered upon, by which the Chevalier's right to the other might occaſionally have tranſpired.

"The words of the Baron, and the uſe he was capable of making of this diſcovery, ſoon recalled my huſband's powers of recollection. He ſaw himſelf on the edge of a precipice, from whence he muſt either be hurled to utter deſtruction, or endeavour to overleap its boundary. The latter, at this juncture, was the moſt difficult, but it was likewiſe the moſt neceſſary to attempt;—he tried it, and without condeſcending to any meanneſs or ſervile attention, ſtrove at leaſt to avoid every appearance of intentional offence

"De

" De Verney, ſufficiently ſenſible that his conduct would not bear inveſtigation, met the Chevalier's intentions more than half way; and thus a tacit compromiſe ſeemed to be concluded (between characters, in other reſpects, totally oppoſite), to bear and forbear with each other, as much as the peculiar circumſtances of the caſe would permit.

" St. Hypolite, nevertheleſs, ſaw the propriety of acquainting his ſiſter with the extent of his knowledge reſpecting the principles and character of their new relative; for he felt it an incumbent duty to put her on her guard againſt the plauſibility of his manners and addreſs, neither of which were by any means contemptible.

" He therefore ſeized the earlieſt opportunity for this purpoſe, and learned, at the ſame time, that the title of De Verney had fallen to its preſent poſſeſſor a very ſhort time previous to his arrival at Narbonne, where he made his appearance ſome weeks after my huſband's return from his firſt viſit to his father; at which period, the Baron was only known by the appellation of M. de Courſon, the name his mother bore during her widowhood, and under which deſignation Mademoiſelle de St. Cyprian had formerly mentioned him to her brother, as a young man of *faſhionable* morals.

" The circumſpection neceſſary to be obſerved by a perſon in the Chevalier's ſituation, had forced him to decline all correſpondence of an epiſtolary nature, with any of his own family, during his reſidence at Narbonne; conſequently he was ignorant of what principally paſſed at Mount St. Cyprian, though, had the caſe been otherwiſe, there was almoſt an equal chance of remaining unacquainted with every circumſtance relative to the Baron, as Magdeleine had then never ſeen him, and felt not the ſmalleſt curioſity on his account.—Thus a combination of unforeſeen incidents nearly conſpired to render ineffectual the whole ſyſtem of precaution which the Chevalier, my brother, and myſelf had ſo long, ſo religiouſly endeavoured to place on a ſure foundation."

The Counteſs here pauſed to unfold ſeveral letters, and, after glancing her eyes over the various dates of them, thus proceeded:—

" The next epiſtle I received from St. Hypolite, informed me that Mademoiſelle de St. Cyprian had acquainted him with her apprehenſions that their ſtepmother entertained the deſign of effecting an union between her and De Verney.

' She is never without a ſcheme of ſome kind,' ſaid Magdeleine to her brother, ' and the one now aſcribed to her is by no means improbable; becauſe, knowing

knowing your generous intentions in my favour, and finding her ill-uſage, and artful machinations with my father, equally unſucceſsful in accompliſhing her wiſh of driving me to follow my ſiſter's example, ſhe has, perhaps, changed her battery, with the view of ſecuring ſome part of the fortune, if it cannot be obtained without my perſonal encumbrance into the bargain.'

'This intelligence alarmed me,' continued the Chevalier, 'and my fears were not leſſened by the reaſons my ſiſter aſſigned for ſuch a ſuſpicion. From this moment I reſolved to obſerve the mother and ſon with unremitting attention. They themſelves let no opportunity eſcape of making up to me, and evidently ſought for occaſions of ingratiating each other in my good opinion. The motive of action was, however, fathomable. To lull diſtruſt aſleep, and prevent too ſtrict a ſcrutiny on manœuvres they were conſcious would not bear inveſtigation, was at leaſt worth attempting, and the bias of their natural diſpoſitions rendered them equal to the undertaking.'—

"To oppoſe art with diſſimulation may, in ſome caſes, be allowable—nay, even laudable, where the defeat of vice is in queſtion. Self-defence is the firſt law of nature; and, without paying ſome attention to that ruling principle, the unſuſpicious,

the innocent, and the weak would ſpeedily become an eaſy prey to the worthleſs and intereſted part of mankind;—a ſhort acquaintance with the world ſerves, indeed, to teach us this neceſſary leſſon.—That it may be requiſite to learn it, is perhaps a mortifying proof of moral depravity, but the fact is not altered by ſuch a conviction; and, as the evil cannot be removed by individual exertion, ſome degree of wiſdom is at leaſt apparent in guarding againſt probable conſequences, when the exiſtence of our welfare is implicated in the ſucceſs of unjuſtifiable meaſures levelled at our peace by the hand of a deſigning and revengeful enemy."

Mademoiſelle de Cordet's ſentiments on this ſubject accorded too much with thoſe of the Counteſs, to attempt any refutation of what the latter had advanced, and the narrator continued her hiſtory.

"In compliance with the conciliatory ſyſtem adopted by Madame de St. Cyprian and the Baron, the latter, my huſband informed me, took an opportunity of joining him one day in the garden, and, with his cuſtomary addreſs, entered upon the leading and moſt cenſurable features of his former conduct, which, with much ſeeming candour, and many expreſſions of apparent contrition, he profeſſed to condemn with ſeverity; though, at the

ſame time, indirectly palliating every enormity by the uſual excuſe of youth, bad company, and a too eaſy temper to reſiſt the influence of temptation and evil example. Having run through the different notes of this tune, he reverted again to the penitential one, and declared his firm reſolution of amendment, with rather too much volubility of utterance. In ſhort, the whole harangue was a maſterpiece of its kind, and might have obtained credit for ſome ſincerity, had not the actor been too viſible in every part of it.

" The Chevalier's looks, perhaps, conveyed this idea; for De Verney more than once appeared abaſhed, as he waited, but vainly waited, to receive the encouraging ſmile of applauſe. St. Hypolite defeated every endeavour to diſcover the impreſſion this morſel of ſelf-concerted accuſation had produced on his mind, and perſevered in treating the mother and ſon with polite reſerve and watchful ceremony.

' Nevertheleſs,' continued the Chevalier, ſtill ſpeaking on the ſame topic, in a ſubſequent letter, ' nevertheleſs my fears on Magdeleine's account, once or twice led me to venture a hint on the cauſe of them to my father; but the ſubject was evidently diſpleaſing. Any ſuſpicion, though ever ſo diſtant, of his wife's conduct, appeared to jar upon

upon his feelings, and produce an irritable tendency foreign to his natural diſpoſition. On thoſe occaſions, he expreſſed ſuch anxiety to remove the prejudices which, he ſaid, Madame apprehended I harboured againſt her, either from bad advice, or merely as a ſtepmother, a character ever liable to miſrepreſentation, that I plainly ſaw the opening of his eyes was a work of ſupererogation beyond my abilities to accompliſh, without laying the foundation of much domeſtic diſcord in the family—a circumſtance I ſolely wiſhed to avoid on his own account: for I love my father—I venerate him with true filial affection, and would not, for any conſideration, diſturb the tranquillity of his mind, where it is ſo viſibly intereſted.—Alas! viſibly indeed!—Yet the error, if it is one, claims reſpect, at leaſt from his children, ſince the ſpring of action proceeds from a miſtaken notion, that the promotion of their happineſs is the principal object in view; for the Counteſs is the moſt artful of human beings, and ſeems to have wove herſelf into his very exiſtence, by the plauſibility of her ſpecious behaviour to my ſiſter and me while in his preſence—a proceeding that never fails to rivet his blind attachment ſtill cloſer, from the ſentiments of gratitude he believes her due, in return for every inſtance of oſtenſible tenderneſs beſtowed upon us.'

"I

"I am ſenſible that minute details of this deſcription are generally fatiguing to people not particularly intereſted in them," ſaid Madame de Narbonne; "once more then, my dear Charlotte, pardon my prolixity. I ſhould not have dwelt thus long on ſo unpleaſant a theme, were I not anxious to make you thoroughly acquainted with the unprincipled and artful characters of thoſe my huſband and myſelf were unhappily connected with, that ſo you may better be enabled to form ſome idea of the various difficulties we had mutually to encounter; and the gradual, though almoſt imperceptible degrees by which our final deſtruction was afterwards accompliſhed."

True friendſhip ſpeaks as often by looks as words. Charlotte's feelings did not require many of the latter, to convince the Counteſs of her ſincerity, when ſhe beſought her to continue her communications; which requeſt was immediately complied with, as will be ſeen in the next chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

" ——— Never can true reconcilement grow
" Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc'd ſo deep.
.....
" ——————— With neceſſity,
" The tyrant's plea, excuſed his deviliſh deeds."

MILTON.

" DEEPLY intereſted in whatever concerned my huſband's peace of mind, I waited impatiently for further intelligence from Mount St. Cyprian; but its arrival ſerved not to allay the uneaſy anxiety his former communications had already produced. He informed me that, on returning home after a temporary abſence, his ſiſter had confirmed all his recent apprehenſions, in regard to De Verney's intentions.

intentions. The Baron, it ſeems, had ſeized that opportunity to put his views in execution, and even proceeded ſo far as to ſolicit the immediate poſſeſſion of her hand; or, at leaſt, endeavoured to obtain an obligatory promiſe to that effect. From ſeveral circumſtances accompanying this extraordinary attempt, it appeared pretty evident that the old Count's approbation ſanctioned the propoſal.—St. Hypolite had frequently obſerved, with ſecret indignation, the progreſs made by the Baron in his father's good opinion, though he little ſuſpected the extent of its influence.

"It is true, Madame de St. Cyprian's wiſhes on the occaſion were not doubted; yet leſs blame ſeemed attached to her conduct, when it was conſidered that ſhe was hitherto ignorant of her ſon's prior engagement in the matrimonial way—an engagement indeed, the validity of which he had ſpared no pains to do away, on every favourable opportunity that offered of entering upon the topic with my huſband. But his powers of perſuaſion were unequal to the taſk of conviction; though the preſent proceeding ſeemed to indicate he entertained a different opinion, and had vainly flattered himſelf with a more ſucceſsful termination to the credit of his aſſertions.

"Scarcely

" Scarcely could the Chevalier command ſufficient patience to hear the concluſion of Magdeleine's intelligence.

' Enraged at De Verney's preſumption, after the prior knowledge he was not ignorant I poſſeſſed of his real character,' ſaid my huſband, ' I was going, in defiance of every prudential conſideration, to reproach him with the unprincipled and daring duplicity of his conduct, when my ſiſter haſtily caught hold of my arm, and entreated I would liſten to what ſhe had further to ſay with calmneſs, as the remainder of her information particularly related to myſelf.

' Startled at the idea theſe words produced, I eagerly beſought her to proceed and explain her meaning. The involuntary emotion they occaſioned was too viſible to eſcape obſervation. Poor Magdeleine ſpeedily remarked it;—ſhe ſaw all was not right, and ſhe gazed upon my face with a gliſtening, inquiſitive eye, whoſe melancholy expreſſion apparently indicated a confirmation of ſome hidden, but painful apprehenſion.

' With trembling anxiety I repeated my requeſt; ſhe ſighed deeply, and removing her eyes, with a look of deſpondency, reſumed her diſcourſe.

' It ſeems, after experiencing the inutility of gentle means to free herſelf from the deteſted importunity

importunity of De Verney, Magdeleine at length perceived the neceſſity of adopting more peremptory meaſures for bringing matters to a final concluſion between them. Perhaps the mode ſhe fixed upon was too explicit for his feelings; at leaſt, its ſubſequent effects made her fear ſo. His chagrin and diſappointment proved extreme; they threw him off his guard, and, in the firſt moment of irritation, he hinted at a ſecret of mine then in his poſſeſſion; from the future management of which, he ſaid, ſhe might probably be too late convinced of my imprudence, in venturing to influence her opinion, which he had no doubt was the caſe, till ſuch time as I could boldly ſtand forth, and vindicate my own character from thoſe imputations he more than ſuſpected I had thrown upon his.

'This inſinuation,' purſued St. Hypolite, 'was a little too much to ſupport with any tolerable degree of compoſure;—for an inſtant it almoſt unmanned me. I trembled leſt our connection was diſcloſed, and ſhuddered at the thoughts of your ſufferings, ſhould the Count de Narbonne become acquainted with it.

'The ſound of approaching footſteps at this juncture obliged us to ſeparate; my ſiſter left the room, and I had leiſure to meditate on the foregoing intelligence, without deriving much benefit from

from the ſelf-reflections which preſented themſelves to view. One obſervation, however, was particularly galling. I now recollected that real or imaginary traces of vindictive malice ſat upon the Baron's features, when I ſlightly accoſted him on my laſt return to Mount St. Cyprian. The circumſtance, indeed, had made no great impreſſion at the time; but it recurred to my memory, at preſent, with all the force of "holy writ," and jarred upon remembrance with the anticipated horrors of futurity.—I became ſuddenly ſick—my head ſwam—I ſtruck it in a ſpeechleſs agony of ſorrow, and ſinking into the neareſt chair, ſtedfaſtly fixed my aching eyeballs on ſome oppoſite object, which, nevertheleſs, I yet did not obſerve.—For you, my deareſt Adelaide, I felt!—for you I bled through every vein!—Tortured with the dread of conſtituting the miſery of her, for whoſe happineſs I would gladly have renounced my own exiſtence, retroſpection drove hope from its ſtation, and left me a very wretch indeed!

'In this ſituation poor Magdeleine found me, after a few minutes' abſence;—the ſtate to which ſhe ſaw me reduced terrified her, and no means to effect an alteration for the better were left untried, that the tendereſt affection could employ.

"Finding

« Finding I might ſafely entruſt this dear girl with any incident, of whatever importance to myſelf, I related our ſituation, and the motives that made me apprehend the extent of De Verney's knowledge; for our attachment could not, I am perſuaded, be concealed from his penetration after you and I, my beloved Adelaide, came to a right underſtanding; and I have more than mere conjecture for the aſſertion, when I ſay, that to me he certainly attributed the change he experienced in your ſubſequent treatment of him.

' After opening my mind to a ſiſter, whoſe principles and diſpoſition are worthy of my confidence, and ſuperior to deceiving me in any reſpect, we agreed upon the beſt mode of future conduct that then preſented itſelf. By degrees my tranquillity returned, at leaſt comparatively, I ſhould ſay, for ſtill an apprehenſion of evil hung heavy on my heart; but the turbulence of its firſt approach had conſiderably ſubſided, and I even ventured to hope that no further conſequences might ariſe from this diſagreeable affair to diſturb our peace. Of one thing, on cooler reflection, I am now fully perſuaded, that, however he may form ſuppoſitions of a mutual attachment exiſting between us, no certainty of its real nature and extent can poſſibly be diſcovered to him.'

« You

" You may well believe, my dear Charlotte," continued the Counteſs, " with what agitation I read this epiſtle; and the contents of it led me to dread that our motions were not ſo unattended to as we had flattered ourſelves was the caſe.—Margaretta, about this time, informed me that a very ſuſpicious looking man had more than once been lately obſerved in the neighbourhood of the Caſtle, who gave but an unſatisfactory account of himſelf, when queſtioned on the ſubject of his appearance; which event, however, ſhe would probably not have judged worthy of repetition, had not her apprehenſions been rouſed from the communications of St. Hypolite, with which I partially entruſted her.

" A further inveſtigation reſpecting the myſterious ſtranger was now ſet on foot; and though no abſolute confirmation crowned our enquiries, yet the reſult by no means removed thoſe fears already entertained on his account. I therefore thought it expedient to acquaint my huſband of a circumſtance ſo inexplicable, and entreated him to forbear attempting to ſee me at preſent.

" Unhappily, another ſource of diſtreſs now agitated my ſoul with the proſpect of additional difficulties;—my ſituation became every day more critical, and liable to obſervation.—I knew not what

what to determine upon, nor how to extricate myſelf from the eyes of ſuſpicion; ever ready to diſcover what we are moſt anxious to conceal from their knowledge. The receſs was all I had to depend upon for this purpoſe; and my good nurſe, aſſiſted by her huſband, contrived by various ſtratagems to make the neceſſary arrangements, that were indiſpenſible for one in my predicament.

"The ſeventh month of my reckoning now approached, when I was one day ſent for by my father.

"I entered his apartment with a kind of preſentiment that all was not right. In a peremptory tone of voice he commanded me to draw near, and fixing his eyes on my face, with a look that made me tremble for what was to follow, ſternly demanded to know whether the Chevalier de St. Hypolite really was, or was not, the perſon he had repreſented himſelf to be?

"It is fortunate that the human mind ſometimes feels itſelf enabled to riſe above the preſſure of preſent trial, when no other viſible ſource of ſupport remains to ſuſtain it, but ſelf-exertion.—I know not how it happened, nor can I, even at this inſtant, account for the unexpected fortitude that came to my aid from the firſt moment my father addreſſed me. His manner, looks, and voice were neither

intended,

intended, nor certainly calculated to inſpire confidence; yet I felt myſelf leſs intimidated than uſual by the abrupt harſhneſs of my reception. Perhaps, ſeeing the criſis of my fate at hand, and finding I could anſwer without an abſolute violation of truth, though undoubtedly not unaccompanied by a ſmall degree of mental prevarication, my ſituation appeared leſs dreadful in practice than theory. So it was, however, that my reply, and the firmneſs with which I pronounced it, ſeemed to ſtagger the Count not a little. He pauſed a moment; a darker frown gathered on his brow, and his eyes flaſhed with a deeper expreſſion of indignation, as he fiercely enquired, if it was true, as he had been informed, that I had dared to form any connection inimical to his honour, or my own? —This queſtion, I judged, might alſo be ſafely anſwered without the ſmalleſt infringement of veracity, and I replied with a degree of courage I believe the humiliating nature of ſuch a ſuppoſition inſpired, that I was not accuſtomed to ſet ſo trifling a value either on his honour or my own, as to render myſelf unworthy of the houſe I ſprung from; and that of this he might always reſt perfectly aſſured, if it was not in my power to increaſe the luſtre it already poſſeſſed, I ſhould at leaſt never conduct myſelf ſo meanly as to tarniſh, by any reprehenſible

reprehenſible proceeding, the noble name of Narbonne, which had deſcended unſullied to me, through ſo long a line of illuſtrious anceſtors.

"Without any premeditated intention of mine, this ſpeech was too much in my father's own ſtyle to be diſpleaſing; though pride repreſſed the ſecret, but not unſatisfactory ſenſation it occaſioned, from a public diſplay of approbation. It was evident, however, that he did not imagine me poſſeſſed of ſo much ſpirit, or capable of a ſimilar exertion; and, in fact, I was afterwards, on reflection, as greatly ſurpriſed at ſuch an inſtance of reſolution as he could be. No doubt the idea of diſhonour, when attached to my engagements with St. Hypolite, gave me infinitely more fortitude than I before knew myſelf miſtreſs of.

"True to the natural bias of his haughty character, the Count was yet unwilling to let himſelf appear miſinformed; or to admit the poſſibility of an error in judgment having led him to form a groundleſs ſuppoſition on ſo material a ſubject as the preſent.

"A ſecond and longer pauſe enſued; and his features, which had relaxed a little, now aſſumed additional ſeverity, as the reſolution he had taken gradually ſtrengthened in his mind.

" In a few minutes I was again ordered to approach nearer, in a voice that exacted immediate compliance. One more ſolemn, ſevere, and final proof of confirmation was yet to be given; and pointing to the floor, while his eyes were rivetted on my now varying countenance with a look of the deepeſt ſcrutiny—

' There,' ſaid he, ' kneel down before your parent, and ſwear, in the moſt binding manner, never to wed one bearing the deteſted name of St. Cyprian!'

" This was a blow I did not expect, and the weight of it had nearly betrayed me. I ventured, however, to aſk why my father ſhould ſuppoſe ſuch a ſtep neceſſary; or how he imagined it poſſible for me to form any connection with a family I had ſo ſmall a chance of even meeting?

' I want no interrogation, Mademoiſelle,' replied he, with an inexpreſſible air of *hauteur*; ' I did not ſend for you to be queſtioned, but to queſtion; and therefore demand unconditional acquieſcence, without farther enquiry.'

" I was going to ſpeak.

' Perform,' cried he, abruptly interrupting my deſign, while a tremendous look almoſt annihilated me, ' perform what is required of you, as the laſt proof of exculpation from thoſe charges my information

information contains, or I ſhall inſtantly take more effectual meaſures to render you obedient.'

" His eyes glared with a fiercer expreſſion of paſſion as he ſpoke, and every nerve ſhook with the agitation produced by intemperate rage, ungovernable pride, and an hereditary thirſt for the gratification of that hatred with which his vindictive ſpirit continued to purſue the Houſe of St. Cyprian.

END OF VOL. II.

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